Kristen Ghodsee

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Socialist Women's Activism
and Global Solidarity during the Cold War

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Duke University Press
Durham & London 2019

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Courtney Leigh Baker
Typeset in Warnock Pro and Helvetica Neue by Copperline Books

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Ghodsee, Kristen Rogheh, [date] author.
Title: Second world, second sex : socialist women's activism and global solidarity during the Cold War / Kristen Ghodsee.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018026169 (print) | LCCN 2018029608 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478003274 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478001393 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9781478001812 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Women's rights—International cooperation—History—20th century. | Feminism—International cooperation—History—20th century. | Women political activists—History—20th century. | International Women's Year, 1975. | International Women's Decade, 1976-1985. | Women and socialism. | Women—Political activity—Bulgaria. | Women—Political activity—Zambia.
Classification: LCC JZ1253.2 (ebook) | LCC JZ1253.2 .G47 2019 (print) | DDC 305.4209171/709045—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018026169

Cover art: Course participants in the WIDF-CBWM School for Solidarity, Bulgaria, 1980.

For Elena Lagadinova
and Irene Tinker

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAPSO
Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization

ACWF
All-China Women's Federation

AAWC
All-African Women's Conference

ANC
African National Congress

BCP
Bulgarian Communist Party

BL
British Library

BSAC
British South Africa Company

CAW
Congress of American Women

CBW/CBWM
Committee of Bulgarian Women/Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (This committee had two different names during its history)

CEDAW
Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CIA
Central Intelligence Agency (United States)

COINTELPRO
Counter-Intelligence Program (United States)

CPUSA
Communist Party of the USA

CSW
Commission on the Status of Women (United Nations)

DFL
Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party

EAP
Endangered Archives Program

ERA
Equal Rights Amendment (United States)

FBI
Federal Bureau of Investigation (United States)

FLS
Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

GAD
Gender and Development

G-77
Group of 77 developing nations in the UN General Assembly

HUAC
House Un-American Activities Committee

IISH
International Institute for Social History

ILO
International Labor Organization

INSTRAW
United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

NAIMSAL
National Anti-Imperialist Movement for Solidarity with African Liberation

NIEO
New International Economic Order

NGO
nongovernmental organization

NOW
National Organization for Women

NSC
National Security Council

PAWO
Pan-African Women's Organization

PKI
Partai Komunis Indonesia (Communist Party of Indonesia)

REWA
Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Committee

TsDA
Tsentralen Darzhaven Arhiv (Central State Archives. Bulgaria)

UN
United Nations

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNICEF
United Nations Children's Fund

UNIP
United National Independence Party

UNIP-WB
United National Independence Party-Women's Brigade

UNIP-WL
United National Independence Party-Women's League

UPP
United Progressive Party

USAID
US Agency for International Development

WEAL
Women's Equity Action League

WID
Women in Development

WIDF
Women's International Democratic Federation

WILPF
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

WREE
Women for Racial and Economic Equality

WSP
Women Strike for Peace

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations from the Bulgarian are mine or that of my former research assistant Mira Nikolova, unless the quotes derive from a Bulgarian source that has already been translated into English. In the endnotes and bibliography, all transliterations are mine. Transliterating the Bulgarian Cyrillic alphabet into Latin letters presents some challenges, as there are different traditions and much inconsistency regarding usage. The trickiest characters are the Bulgarian ф (which can be transliterated as "ff" or "v"), ъ (which can be transliterated as "a," "u," or "ŭ"), and ц (which is either "tz" or "ts"). Throughout the book, when doing my transliterations from the Bulgarian, I have chosen to use "v" for ф, "ts" for ц, and "a" for ъ. I also transliterate ж as "zh," and я as "ya." However, in the case of previously published materials and names already transliterated into Latin letters by the authors, I have reproduced the words in their published transliterated form. I have also retained the English spellings of well-known geographical names such as Sofia and Bulgaria (rather than Sofiya and Balgariya). As a result, there will be some inconsistencies in the text.

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Acknowledgments

This book has been a long time in the making and was supported by generous grants from many institutions and foundations in the United States and Europe. The initial seeds for this project were planted while I was a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in 2010–11. I am most grateful to Bowdoin College for providing me with various pots of seed money to fund some of my initial trips to Bulgaria and the Netherlands. The real breakthrough came when I won a generous grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 2012, which gave me funds for travel to Zambia and the opportunity to buy some time off to conduct research. In 2014–15, I was a senior external fellow at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies in Germany, which generously hosted me for the entire academic year. In 2015–16, I benefitted from fellowships from the Imre Kertész Kolleg at the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena, Germany, for five months, and from the Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki in Finland for three months. Once again, I won several small faculty development grants from Bowdoin College, and they graciously allowed me to take a two-year sabbatical leave. Finally, Diana and Matthew Webster lent me their home in London in August 2016, giving me the gift of unlimited and uninterrupted writing time so that I could finish the first draft of this book before my return to full time teaching.

A wide variety of friends, mentors, and colleagues offered advice or read and commented on various sections of this manuscript over the eight years I have been working on it, including Maria Bucur, Anne Clifford,

Krassimira Daskalova, Francisca de Haan, Susan Faludi, Jane Jaquette, Sandrine Kott, Sonya Michel, Maxine Molyneux, Joan W. Scott, Scott Sehon, Maria Todorova, Barbara Weinstein, and Sharon Wolchik. I am also deeply grateful for the many efforts of my former student, Mira Nikolova, who started as my research assistant in the spring of 2010 and continued to help with various aspects of this project over the next six years. Mira read through hundreds of pages of documents, sought out sources in the National Library, grappled with translations of official documents in convoluted bureaucratic Bulgarian, and organized the massive amount of paper brought back from Sofia to Maine. Mira's thoughtful questions and dedicated support were invaluable to the completion of this project.

Some of the material in chapter 1 was previously published as "State Socialist Women's Organizations in Cold War Perspective: Revisiting the Work of Maxine Molyneux," *Aspasia*: *The International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* 10 (2016): 111–21. Portions of chapter 2 appeared as "Pressuring the Politburo: The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and State Socialist Feminism," *Slavic Review* 73, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 538–62. Certain sections scattered over the three chapters on the United Nations conferences previously appeared in "Rethinking State Socialist Mass Women's Organizations: The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and the United Nations Decade for Women, 1975–1985," *Journal of Women's History* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 49–73. I have also been inspired by and expanded on research that I used for my articles: "*Internationalisme socialiste et féminisme d'État pendant la Guerre froide. Les relations entre Bulgarie et Zambie,*" *Clio. Femmes, genre, histoire*, no. 41 (2015): 115–137; "Research Note: The historiographical challenges of exploring Second World–Third World alliances in the international women's movement," *Global Social Policy*, 14, no. 2 (2014): 244–264; and "Revisiting the United Nations Decade for Women: Brief Reflections on Feminism, Capitalism, and Cold War politics in the Early Years of the International Women's Movement," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33, no. 1 (2010): 3–12.

I am grateful to the archivists at the Central State Archives in Bulgaria, the National Archives of Zambia, the International Institute for Social History in the Netherlands, the Sophia Smith Collection in Northampton, Massachusetts, and at the British Library in London. I am also deeply indebted to all of the women I interviewed in Bulgaria and Zambia, and particularly those who shared their personal archives with me. I am especially grateful to Virginia (Ginny) Hopcroft, the Bowdoin government docu-

ments librarian, for helping me track down key United Nations sources at the very beginning of this project.

At Duke University Press, I feel blessed to be working with such an amazing editorial, design, and marketing staff. Courtney Berger has been an incredible editor, and her insightful comments and suggestions for revision improved the manuscript beyond measure. Sandra Korn, Sara Leone, Christine Riggio, Laura Sell, and the rest of the Duke University Press staff take excellent care of their authors. I am thankful for the insightful comments of the anonymous external reviewers, and for the copyediting of Susan Deeks.

As always, I am grateful for the patience of my partner and daughter who supported me in innumerable ways as I worked on the manuscript. I feel like my daughter grew up while I wrote this book, following me around the world as I chased down sources and holed myself up to write. I am glad that my daughter had the chance to meet Elena Lagadinova in person at least once, because the latter provided so much support with this research project over the many years I worked on it. Lagadinova gave me access to her personal archive and shared her many memories with me over the scores of times we met between 2010 and 2017. Unfortunately, I kept interrupting work on this book to write three others. Although one of those, *The Left Side of History*, explored parts of Lagadinova's life, it was my great hope that I would be able to share this one with her in print. But I delayed too long; Lagadinova died on October 29, 2017 at the age of 87.

Finally, I thank Irene Tinker, my mentor at the University of California, Berkeley, in the late 1990s and the person who first inspired my interest in the United Nations Decade for Women. I first met Irene in 1996, just a year after she attended the Beijing conference, in her final years of university teaching before her retirement. Irene was an endless font of insights and wisdom about the "global women's movement," and it was she who encouraged me to do research on the East European women who attended the world conferences. Irene Tinker served as a member of the board of directors at the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and she remembered that they regularly received reports about the status of women in the Eastern Bloc countries. "I thought they were just propaganda at the time," Irene recalled, "But maybe they were true." I wrote my first article about the influence of the Cold War on women's international development programs with Irene's help, which was published in 2003. Since that first article fifteen years ago, Irene has been a generous interlocutor, reading my work

and offering her feedback. She has not always agreed with me, but she has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation. Irene is really one of those women who has endeavored to pass her torch to the next generation of feminist scholars. I am truly awed by her decades of passion and perseverance.

Although Elena and Irene never met, they were kindred spirits and shared a passion for women's rights. Their efforts made the world a better place for those who came after them. They were my foremothers, and it is to both Elena and Irene that I dedicate this book.

Introduction. Erasing the Past

In September 1995, more than seventeen thousand women gathered in Beijing to attend the Fourth World Conference on Women. Diplomatic representatives of United Nations member states gathered to prepare an official conference document—the Platform for Action—while thousands of activists met at a separate forum for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to discuss and debate women's issues. Marking the twentieth anniversary of the International Women's Year and the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975, the Beijing conference celebrated two decades of women's activism at the United Nations and the global movement for women's rights it had inspired. There was only one problem. Women from the countries that had initiated the original call for an International Women's Year back in the early 1970s were being "intentionally shut-out" of the discussions.[1] Frustrated and ignored, several of these women circulated a "Statement from the Non-Region." The statement included a map showing the location of their nations to remind their fellow conference-goers that they still existed.[2]

At issue was text in the conference document's "Global Framework" chapter. In a paragraph on the geopolitical climate affecting women's rights, the authors of the proposed Beijing Platform for Action had chosen to downplay the importance of what was, to many women in attendance, an event of massive political significance: the sudden and unexpected end of the Cold War. In the final document, the chaos and upheaval of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the violent revolution in Romania, the divorce of the Czech Republic from Slovakia, the collapse and breakup of the Soviet Union, and the genocidal wars of Yugoslav succession (all of which af-

fected hundreds of millions of women from Budapest to Vladivostok) received only two cursory sentences in the official conference document: "In Central and Eastern Europe the transition to parliamentary democracy has been rapid and has given rise to a variety of experiences, depending on the specific circumstances of each country. While the transition has been mostly peaceful, in some countries this process has been hindered by armed conflict that has resulted in grave violations of human rights."[3] The collapse of communism had radically shifted the geopolitical terrain of international relations across the globe, including in the socialist-aligned countries in the developing world, but the "transition" in Eastern Europe was acknowledged in the second half of exactly one of the 361 paragraphs of the Platform for Action.

More important, women's activists from the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe—what used to be called the "Second World"[4]—were once leading voices at the United Nations. They included women such as Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space, who led the Soviet delegation to the previous three UN conferences. Elena Lagadinova—the youngest female partisan fighting against the Nazi-allied monarchy in Bulgaria during World War II—led her country's delegation to the 1975 and 1985 conferences, and was a prominent organizer of women from the East European and socialist countries of the Global South. Lagadinova had been elected general rapporteur in Nairobi (the official spokeswoman for the conference to the world's press) and in 1991 had received a medal from an American university honoring her achievements. Chibesa Kankasa of Zambia was a national heroine, a soldier in the struggle for her country's independence from the British. Kankasa's compatriot Lily Monze was the first Zambian woman to earn a university degree and would eventually serve as her nation's ambassador to France. Kankasa and Monze held senior positions in the Zambian government, and both had attended the conferences in 1980 and 1985. Tereshkova, Lagadinova, Kankasa, and Monze were all proponents of various forms of socialism, and without these women—and their united opposition to the official delegations from the United States and its Western allies—the issue of women's rights would never have garnered the attention of male politicians on either side of the Iron Curtain. But by 1995, their legacies were already being erased.

Obscuring the contributions of East European women and socialist women from the developing countries allows for a particular story about the United Nations Decade for Women to be told, one that credits Western women and independent social movements for the progress of wom-

FIGURE INTRO.1
Valentina Tereshkova and Elena Lagadinova, circa 1970.

en's rights during that era. But the Cold War context was just as important as any march or consciousness-raising session. Superpower rivalries played a key role in bringing global attention to the status of women in the mid-1970s. Although women had advocated for various rights long before the 1975 UN International Women's Year, members of the second sex still faced a vast ocean of legal, economic, and cultural barriers. In Western democracies, bias conspired to keep women in their domestic roles, and those who ventured out into the workforce struggled against pay discrimination, sexual harassment, and glass ceilings. In developing countries, poverty, colonialism, and patriarchal traditions combined to keep women subservient to, and economically dependent on, men. Even in the state socialist countries, which supposedly had solved the "woman question" through the abolition of private property and the full incorporation of women into the labor force, women staggered under the weight of the double burden of paid employment and domestic work.

The first three world conferences—Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985—forced national governments to expend new resources to examine laws, collect data, and create special women's desks and ministries. Governments enacted measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in women's

FIGURE INTRO.2
Chibesa Kankasa, circa 1970.

rights with respect to inheritance, child custody, and loss of nationality. In Copenhagen, Valentina Tereshkova, Chibesa Kankasa, and other representatives from UN member countries signed the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a treaty that still serves as an international Bill of Rights for women. The convention explicitly protected women's reproductive rights, and it encouraged nations to resist cultural norms and practices that oppressed women in the public and the private sphere. International events between 1975 and 1985 also challenged millennia of ideas about women's "natural" roles and opened a new landscape of opportunities because two rival superpowers vied for the hearts and minds of the world's women. This book recaptures some of the energy and enthusiasm that infused socialist women's activism and argues that their contributions to the history of twentieth-century women's rights should no longer be ignored. Leftist women in the Global South forged strategic alliances with their counterparts in Eastern Europe, which allowed them to amplify their collective voices on the international stage.

Recuperating the stories of women such as Elena Lagadinova and Lily Monze can help us rethink the possible role of state actors in challenging millennia of entrenched sexism and discrimination.

The UN Decade for Women provided a platform for women's organizing across the boundaries of class, race, religion, ethnicity, and the nation-state, even as Cold War ideological positions divided women into the West (capitalist), the East (communist), and the Global South. But even these ideological positions did not map neatly onto political realities: there were plenty of socialists and communists in the capitalist West; the "communist" East was a flexibly defined group of nations that usually (but not always) supported the Soviet Union, including Southern countries such as Cuba and Vietnam.[5] The developing countries represented a conglomeration of newly independent nations following various paths to economic development, either nonaligned or aligned with one of the two hegemonic power blocs. During the Cold War, and especially at the United Nations, these three loosely defined and ever-shifting blocs were often homogenized into what was then known as the First, Second, and Third Worlds. These three worlds supposedly represented the fault lines of geopolitics, and the women's activists who participated in the United Nations were well aware of the deep divides that pitted governments against one another in the international arena.

When asked in 2011 to comment on the role of women from Eastern Europe at the UN conferences, Arvonne Fraser, a member of the official US delegation in Mexico and Denmark, recalled that the socialist women had been "a very strong presence" at the meetings, despite the few efforts to preserve the history of their activism. Indeed, women such as Elena Lagadinova helped shape the eleven-year period that gave birth to the "global women's movement" or the "worldwide women's movement,"[6] terms that loosely refer to the networks of women that mobilized around, and participated in, the UN conferences on women, including all of the official and unofficial preparatory meetings aimed at influencing the intergovernmental debates and parallel NGO forums.

Of course, using a term such as the "global women's movement" elides much complexity. From the beginning, women's activism had been influenced by a wide variety of vastly differing political projects, and it is impossible to speak of one global "feminism."[7] Similarly, from the outset "global women's movement" referred to a complex conglomeration of often competing movements that represented women from a broad range of ideological perspectives. Even within the Western capitalist countries,

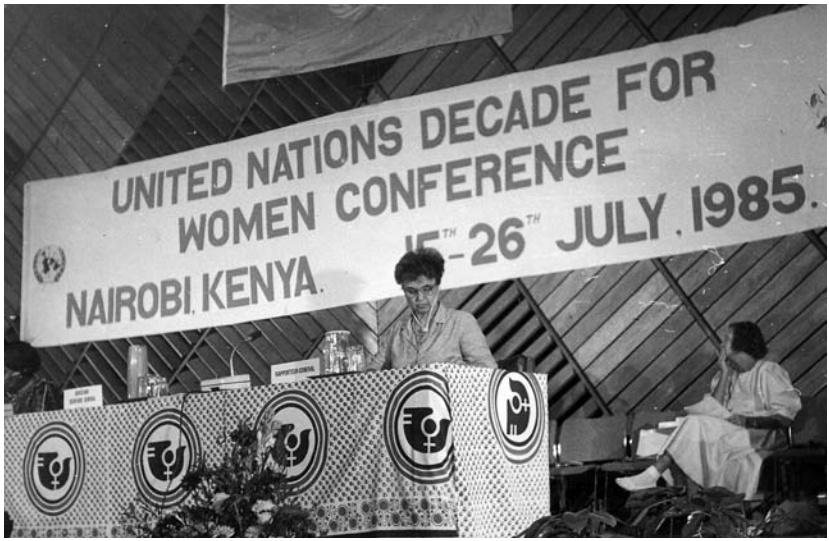

FIGURE INTRO.3 Elena Lagadinova, Nairobi, 1985.

there were multiple feminist perspectives and there was much internal struggle among varying groups of women advocating for different types of rights, whether they were social, economic, or political. But because the women's activism catalyzed by the International Women's Year and the UN Decade for Women happened within a bounded time frame, subsequent feminist activists and authors have often found it convenient to speak of one singular global movement for women's rights, a movement supposedly led by liberal feminists from the Western capitalist countries, the Gloria Steinems and Betty Friedans of *Ms. Magazine* and the National Organization for Women.

But it was women from the Eastern Bloc countries who initially pushed for an International Women's Year to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), a global women's organization that enjoyed consultative status with the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations.[8] In 1972, the General Assembly voted to declare 1975 the International Year of Women, and the WIDF began planning an elaborate World Congress of Women to be hosted in East Berlin in the German Democratic Republic.[9] Since the McCarthy era, the US government had considered the WIDF a "communist front" organization, so American women hoped there would be an official United Nations conference in a noncommunist country.[10] Initially,

the US government did not want to waste money on a conference about women, but under domestic pressure it agreed to help sponsor an official UN conference in Mexico so that the communists would not host the only global event for International Women's Year.[11]

The Mexico City conference in 1975, and the two subsequent Copenhagen and Nairobi conferences, brought official representatives of the world's governments together for deliberations under the auspices of the United Nations. Yet from the outset, little international consensus existed about what a women's conference should strive to achieve. Many Western women, especially the Americans, expected the conference to focus on specific questions of legal and economic equality, as well as efforts to oppose the continued patriarchal oppression of women. A women's conference was supposed to be *about* women. Women such as Tereshkova from the Soviet Union, Lagadinova from Bulgaria, and others from the communist bloc felt they had already earned legal and economic equality. They believed that the conference should provide an opportunity for women to speak about more pressing international issues, providing a forum where they could weigh in on global geopolitics and advocate for peace. Since men dominated the United Nations and most national governments, women needed an opportunity to make their voices heard. A women's conference should be *for* women.

Admittedly, the Second World position largely rested on essentialist assumptions about women's true nature, or what some scholars have called "difference feminism" or "relational feminism."[12] Since women were mothers and primary caregivers, they were supposedly less inclined to violence, and international relations would be more peaceful, based on mutual understanding and cooperation, if women had power at the international level. Because women performed their care work in a wider societal context, representatives of the state socialist women's organizations also believed that women's issues could not be separated from the greater political and economic issues that shaped their lives. Women such as Kankasa and Monze from Zambia largely agreed with their counterparts in countries such as Bulgaria and East Germany and demanded that the official conference allow women to speak on issues of development, colonialism, racism, apartheid, imperialism, and the creation of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which would radically redistribute the world's wealth.[13]

Indeed, by 1985 most women from the developing world (and quite a few women in the First World) had embraced the idea that feminist strug-

FIGURE INTRO.4 Valentina Tereshkova (center) and Elena Lagadinova (left), 1975.

gles could not be separated from issues such as national independence and economic development.[14] Women's equality with men proved useless in a nation torn apart by war or in contexts of racial inequality. This position often frustrated liberal or "equality" feminists from the West who insisted on the primacy of "women's issues," which they took to mean the de facto legal and economic equality between men and women. As Irene Tinker, a prominent American women's rights advocate put it, "We didn't believe that men and women were the same, but if we didn't say they were the same we wouldn't get any of the male privileges."[15] This liberal feminist position came to dominate the politics of the official delegations of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and other key Western countries.[16] They wanted to focus on removing the barriers that prevented women from achieving the kind of independence and autonomy that men enjoyed and on achieving equity in both the workplace and the home. These liberal feminists often frowned on special labor protections for women workers or on gender-specific entitlements (such as

maternity leaves) because they introduced inequalities based on sex. They often referred to the discussion of other issues as "politicization," an attempt to divert attention from the uncomfortable topic of sexual inequality.[17] At Mexico City, a French delegate, Françoise Giroux, argued, "The International Women's Year will have been another mockery if the results are subtly diverted toward either national or international political causes, no matter how pressing, respectable or noble their aims might be."[18] Tinker, who attended the NGO forums of all three conferences, believed that male politicians from the developing countries tried to use the women's conferences to further their agendas: "Did women really have any chance of changing apartheid by voting about it at the conference? The answer is no. Take those issues to the [General Assembly]."[19]

Despite these protests, the world conferences did consider more than just women's issues, and the American "equality" feminists and their allies found themselves outnumbered by the coalition of women representing the "difference" feminism of the Eastern Bloc and the countries from the developing world.[20] Thus, superpower machinations (on both sides) profoundly shaped the contours of International Women's Year and the UN Decade for Women that followed, but by the 1995 conference in Beijing, the importance of the Second World contribution was being erased from the history of global women's activism, prompting several East European women to circulate their "Statement from the Non-Region."

Yet anyone who goes back to read primary documents about the Decade can find evidence of the importance of superpower rivalry. In 1987, Arvonne Fraser wrote openly about the Cold War tensions in 1975: "American women learned that they could be the target of public vilification, which shocked many of them deeply . . . the new U.S. women's movement had taught many American women to think of all women as friends, people united in a common cause. To find this not true, in their first international encounter, was, to some, an infuriating and very disappointing experience."[21]

Other first-person accounts of the UN conferences brim with references to Cold War conflicts. Jane Jaquette, an American political scientist who attended the parallel NGO tribune in Mexico City, also recalled that women from the developing countries challenged the leadership of American women: "I found North American feminists surprised to discover that not everyone shared their view that patriarchy was the major cause of women's oppression, and that Third World women held views closer to Marx than Friedan."[22] In her 2005 intellectual history of women and the

United Nations, the Indian economist Devaki Jain explicitly wrote about how state socialist women supported the positions of women from the Global South: "By the 1960s, the majority of the members in the General Assembly were from the newly liberated countries and these nations and the Eastern bloc countries had become a strong presence in the UN. [The Eastern Bloc] supported the stand taken by developing countries on various issues surrounding development, identity, political participation, and economic policies."[23] Women from the Third World found powerful allies in their state socialist counterparts, and the growing solidarity between the communist countries and the developing countries created a variety of ideological problems for the liberal feminists in the West, especially in the face of accusations that the very concept of feminism was just another form of cultural imperialism. Reporting on the first conference in Mexico City, one journalist wrote that some African women considered what they called "Western feminism" a neocolonialist plot to divide and conquer the men and women of newly independent countries in the Global South.[24] In 2017, historian Jocelyn Olcott captured these tensions at the Mexico City conference in a chapter aptly titled "Betty Friedan versus the Third World."[25]

Indeed, the United States failed to sign two key documents produced by the official women's conferences and only selectively endorsed a third. The American delegation refused to support the "Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace" (1975) for a variety of reasons, but most famously because it equated "Zionism" with the words "racism" and "imperialism." For the same reason, the House of Representatives passed a hasty resolution forbidding the US delegation from signing on to the Programme of Action of 1980, the official conference document supporting a wide range of women's legal rights in terms of property, nationality, and child custody. Facing a similar fiasco in Nairobi, the US delegation threatened to walk out of the conference if the word "Zionism" appeared anywhere in the conference document. Only the careful diplomacy of the Kenyans averted disaster. Still, the Americans submitted reservations to twelve different paragraphs of the Forward-Looking Strategies, disagreeing with issues that ranged from Palestinian women's rights and economic sanctions on the South African apartheid regime to the concept of "equal pay for work of equal value."[26] No other country took exception to as many paragraphs as the United States, and the Eastern Bloc countries had no reservations whatsoever. So where did this history go? Why did East European women in

Beijing feel compelled to circulate a map reminding other women's activists that they still existed?

Victors Writing History

On March 6, 2017, *Forbes* magazine ran an article titled, "The First Woman in Space Turns 80, and You Probably Never Heard of Her."[27] Two years earlier, *Foreign Affairs* had published an article asserting that Elena Lagadinova was "the most important feminist you've never heard of."[28] In 2011, Devaki Jain paid tribute to Vida Tomšič, a Yugoslav communist and women's activist. "I know that Vida is not in your pantheon of goddesses," Jain said, speaking to a largely American audience, "but she certainly is in mine."[29] All three women were giants during the UN Decade for Women, but what unites them today is their obscurity in the historiography. Western women simply had/have more resources to record their histories (see my discussion of sources in the appendix), so the general story of international women's activism at the United Nations has been dominated by the memoirs and oral histories of women from the United States.

Attempts have been made to correct this imbalance. For example, Jain's *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-year Quest for Equality and Justice* (2005) and Peggy Antrobus's *The Global Women's Movement* (2004) both tried to decenter the history of the UN Decade for Women by focusing on the contributions of women from the Global South, but the perception of Western dominance remains. Commenting on the persistence of this trope, Peggy Antrobus writes, "As someone involved in many of the processes that have led to the construction of this worldwide movement, and a witness to the ways in which it has changed since the 1970s, largely through the influence of Third World feminists and women of colour in North America, I am amazed to find that its image remains one of a movement associated with white, middle-class women from North America and [Western] Europe."[30] Within the West, this view has been savaged by "Third World women" and women of color, many of whom attended the parallel forums for NGOs and dissented from the official US position (especially in Nairobi). As a result, it is much easier to reclaim the history of socialist and communist women in China or in the Third World (Angola, Cuba, India, Indonesia, Nicaragua, and so on) than it is to critically reevaluate the work of women from the Second World. Even when it is acknowledged that state socialist women were powerful actors on the international stage, their contributions are downplayed because of

FIGURE INTRO.5
Devaki Jain, 2011.

the persistent stereotype that they were dupes of male communist elites back home.[31]

Moreover, while there are many books on the "global women's movement," none focus on the contributions of women from state socialist countries, and few include their voices, even when the Cold War context and the "politicization" of the meetings is explicitly mentioned. As Francisca de Hann has argued, Cold War stereotypes still deeply influence the historiography of women's movements.[32] Today, when historians and activists discuss conference tensions, they focus on conflicts between the Global North (Western capitalist countries) and the Global South. The former state socialist East is disappeared. For instance, one important volume collected autobiographical essays from twenty-seven women involved in the international women's movement.[33] The book, *Developing Power: How Women Changed International Development* (2004), edited by Arvonne Fraser and Irene Tinker, included women from the developing world but did not include one entry from a woman from the former Second World, as if the latter had no part in transforming the political and economic realities of developing countries during the Cold War. In *Complicit Sisters: Gender and Women's Issues across North-South Divides* (2017), Sara de Jong demotes the former Second World to the Global South, effectively erasing the alternative history of state socialist women's organizations in the former Eastern Bloc.[34] Although Jocelyn Olcott's *The International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History* (2017), on the Mexico City conference, is far more attentive to the Cold War context and recognizes the antagonisms of the "Eastern Bloc and non-aligned delegates" versus the "Anglophone and West Europeans," Olcott's eviden-

tiary base consisted primarily of archives in the United States and Mexico.[35] With the exception of Tereshkova, East European women are rarely named as individual actors and are largely absent from her narrative. This is not to assert that the contributions of Second World women were more significant than those of their colleagues in the Global South, but merely to recognize that they did indeed make important contributions.

Although the omission of Eastern Bloc women most likely results from lack of access to the primary sources in East European languages, powerful social forces in the United States still conspire to squash or delegitimize histories that take East European or state socialist women's activism seriously. It should not be forgotten that the US government targeted women with leftist sympathies after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The historian Landon Storrs demonstrated that advocates for women's and consumer rights during the first Red Scare in the early 1920s were painted as communist sympathizers and thus discredited with the broader American public.[36] In her *Red Feminism, American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (2002), Kate Weigand recuperated many of the communist roots of American feminism and demonstrated how these links were deliberately severed and hidden to avoid suspicion and persecution during the second Red Scare.[37] Daniel Horowitz exposed Betty Friedan's pre-housewife activism in the Progressive Party (much to Friedan's personal dismay),[38] and Erik McDuffie explored the importance of the American Communist Party to the organizing of radical black feminists, documenting their struggles against mainstream anticommunism.[39] But in all cases, the history of leftist women's activism remains marginal to the fantasy of feminist history that dominates the historiography of global women's movements.[40]

Three broad reasons help to make sense of the way the victors have written this history. First, in the West, and in the US especially, anticommunist ideas remain strong, and they conspire to delegitimize anything socialist or communist. This was most obvious in the McCarthy era, when leftist feminists were accused of "un-American activities." Beginning in 1948, the political climate was rife with paranoia and fear following the attack on the Congress of American Women (CAW), the simultaneous savaging of the WIDF (which ultimately led to the suspension of their consultative status with the United Nations), and the ongoing insinuations against organizations such as Women Strike for Peace (WSP) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).[41] Leftist women's activists felt compelled to distance themselves as much as pos-

sible from socialism in theory and in practice.[42] The accusations of right-wing politicians that American feminists must be communists, and the FBI infiltration of domestic women's organizations had a chilling effect on women's rights advocates.[43] Prudent American women kept safely apart from their counterparts in the Eastern Bloc. Thus, in addition to lack of resources and the lack of interest in their own countries, former women's activists in Eastern Europe must contend with rigid stereotypes that have persisted long after the fall of the Berlin Wall.[44]

Second, those scholars and activists who have acknowledged the existence of state socialist women's organizations nonetheless claim that these women lacked "real" power.[45] Since they reported to male party leaders in the Politburo and considered class and racial injustice as just as egregious as sexual inequality, state socialist women were not pure feminists. Because the socialist state created and controlled the mass women's organizations and prohibited independent women's groups, all policies regarding women supposedly came from above, and Western observers believed that, rather than being the voice of women to the Party, state women's organizations existed to promote the Party's goals among women.[46] Because the women in these committees were often members of the Communist Party and privileged the expansion of state welfare policies over the promotion of individual self-actualization and autonomy,[47] they were seen as blind dupes of Marxist patriarchy, rendering them insufficiently concerned with true women's issues.[48] In *Women under Communism* (1978), Barbara Wolf Jancar asserts, "Throughout history, women have served the patriarchal establishment, whether as supporters of the status quo or as revolutionaries seeking to replace one variant of male political order with another. Women are continuing this support in the Communist countries."[49] Thirty-six years later, the American philosopher Nanette Funk continued to validate these stereotypes. Although Funk admitted that communism did "good things" for women, she insisted that communist women deserve little credit for societal changes because they worked within the Party structure: "Promoting women's employment, if done only because of Party directives, makes one an instrument, not an agent or feminist. When women's organizations acted as the state wanted, one needs further evidence that they did not act only because of the will of the state. If so, they were not agents of their own actions, proactive, but instruments."[50]

In Funk's view, then, there were no real feminists in the Eastern Bloc countries, and thus there could be no feminism in the Western conception of the word. Since state socialist women were often working for the

states that advocated for pro-women policies, they could be seen only as acting as an extension of the state, regardless of whether they personally shared the beliefs promoted by that state. If liberal feminists rejected the idea that state socialist women could be feminist agents (or agents at all), there is little wonder that they are written out of the history of feminism.

Third, and perhaps most important for this book, is the fact that most of the women from Eastern Bloc countries and their socialist allies in the developing world would not have called themselves "feminists." Indeed, as I discuss in depth in chapter 1, they reserved the word as an insult to be hurled at "bourgeois" women who hoped to increase their political and economic rights at the expense of their working-class compatriots. Socialist and communist women from the countries of Eastern Europe, along with socialist and communist women from a wide range of developing-world countries taking noncapitalist paths to development (Angola, Cuba, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and so on) and women members of socialist and communist parties in Western countries would refer to themselves as "women's activists." Many viewed women's rights as a fundamental part of the socialist or communist ideal and did not believe that an independent women's movement was necessary to achieve sexual equality with men. In fact, the Romanian philosopher Mihaela Miroiu has argued that "communist feminism" is a contradiction in terms.[51] Scholars have struggled to name this particular brand of state-centric women's activism, calling it "socialist feminism," "state feminism," "communist feminism," or "left feminism." But all of these attempts to name communist women's activists "feminists" elides the idea that one might be able to work for the rights of women without being a feminist or that "communists" are as much in favor of women's rights as "feminists."

Semantic disagreements aside, we must recover the forgotten history of state socialist women's activists at the United Nations. First, the stereotype perpetuated by Funk and others (of socialist women as mere dupes of men with dictatorial power) is incorrect. Funk imagines a monolithic and rigid centralized state with little room for intervention by women. But what if women helped determine the "will of the state"? The leaders of state socialist women's organizations, who were themselves members of both the Party and the state apparatus, might have wielded influence among their male comrades. What if these women truly believed that state ownership of the means of production provided the best possibility for women's emancipation and willingly incorporated their demands into wider programs for revolutionary change? Rather than merely supporting

a male political order, what if communist women chose to become part of a new political program that had the emancipation of women as one of its central principles? This is not to deny the serious political constraints of working within a state socialist system; it is merely to question the idea that communist women suffered from false consciousness by believing that communism would bring greater social, legal, and economic equality. In the stories of the women I tell, I will show that they were often proactive agents, and not the mere instruments that Funk describes.

Second, women in the developing world gained power and influence because of the Cold War, negotiating a place between the United States and the Soviet Union. As women's activists rose up to make demands at the United Nations, they often found support from the women in the Eastern Bloc. In 2005, Devaki Jain lamented the end of the Cold War and the loss of the critical political space opened up by superpower rivalry: "The disintegration of the East and West blocs critically impacted the approach to development. The Socialist bloc had supported approaches that required a strong state, a thrust toward public provision of basic services, and a more equitable global economic program such as the New International Economic Order. It was often an ally of the newly liberated states as they attempted to forge coalitions such as the [Non-Aligned Movement] or the Group of 77 to negotiate with their former colonial masters."[52]

Although my sources are limited to oral history interviews and the fugitive collections of the archival documents that I could find scattered across three continents (see the appendix), I have endeavored to present the events of the UN Decade for Women from the perspective of Bulgarian and Zambian women who considered themselves women's activists. In the chapters that follow I hope to explore some of the contacts between women in the state socialist countries and women in the Global South and how these networks of left-leaning women impacted the UN Decade for Women. While they never achieved everything they claimed, state socialist countries (in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia) did make real strides in terms of women's rights before the Western democracies and their allies in the developing world. The policies and programs put in place were implemented by the state, but they were often shaped by women working within that state, women empowered at different times and in different ways. Their state-centric approach to women's issues was promoted throughout the Global South through solidarity exchanges promoted by mass women's organizations. Yes, these exchanges often supported Eastern Bloc foreign policy goals in Africa, Asia, and Latin Amer-

ica, but they also empowered leftist women as agents of social change and forced local male elites to make space for women's organizing. Third World leaders who wanted military, technical, or financial assistance from the Eastern Bloc had to at least pretend to care about women's issues, and when compared with countries at similar levels of economic development, the state-centric approach provided ample empirical evidence that socialism challenged sexual inequality in traditional patriarchal societies.[53]

Third, although the US tried to delegitimize anything socialist for the better part of the twentieth century, the activism of Eastern Bloc women and their state socialist allies in the Global South did increase attention to international women's issues in the capitalist West. During the Cold War, the West had to deal with the international perception that state socialist countries were the only champions of the socially weak. At the United Nations, the Soviet Union and its allies often accused the capitalist West of failing to improve the lives of women, youth, workers, and racial minorities, accusations that forced attention to marginalized groups and proved productive for the creation of new international conventions to protect social and economic rights. For example, the French Swiss historian Sandrine Kott has shown that superpower rivalry at the International Labor Organization (ILO) had a positive effect on the negotiations about, and eventual creation of, international treaties on forced labor.[54] In particular, Kott argues that coalitions between the Eastern Bloc countries and nations in the developing world forced concessions from the advanced capitalist countries. Cold War tensions not only protected workers from different forms of forced labor but also reified a new political language in which work was seen as an important social right. In the end, the world's workers benefited from the ideological tensions that manifested themselves at the ILO. "Indeed," she writes, "the conflict between the two blocs, like the decolonization process, demarcated a favorable period for defining the juncture between human and social rights. In this respect, the alliance between officials from southern and communist countries could have a catalyzing effect."[55]

Similarly, the ongoing activism of socialist women in the Second and Third Worlds may have increased Western attention to the importance of domestic women's rights. The British sociologist Maxine Molyneux, for example, suggested that "East-West rivalry" proved partially responsible for the rapid "catching up" of the Western democracies with regard to women's issues in the 1970s and 1980s.[56] The demonstrated progress—the legal rights, professional opportunities, and social entitlements enjoyed by

East European women—as well as women in Cuba, China, Vietnam and other nations pursuing a state socialist path to development—may have pressured Western governments to address women's issues. The coalition of Second World and Third World activists claimed that only socialism could guarantee women's rights, and Western democracies may have felt compelled to defend their record, especially when faced with domestic constituencies who could point to the purported achievements of the communist world. As Arvonne Fraser explained in her memoir *She's No Lady* (2007), "Nations have egos," and American feminists "played on that."[57] In this book, I argue that socialist women's activism—particularly the networks forged between women in Eastern Europe and the Global South—proved to be a catalyst for the rapid expansion of women's rights in the second half of the twentieth century.

Finally, telling the stories of state socialist women's organizations allows us to reconsider the nature and goals of contemporary feminism. Nancy Fraser, Susan Faludi, and others have argued that Western feminism has been coopted by the economic project of neoliberalism, with its fetishization of unfettered free markets, emaciated states, and dismantled social safety nets. In 2009, Fraser published a stunning critique of contemporary liberal feminism's abandonment of social justice issues and its narrow focus on identity politics. Her article, titled "Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History," outlined how "the dream of women's emancipation [was] harnessed to the engine of capitalist accumulation."[58] Rather than challenging the structures of inequality that oppressed women, liberal feminists (such as those who concentrated on supporting women's autonomy in a world of legally guaranteed sexual equality with men) unwittingly paved the way for the expansion of an economic system that ultimately increased the wealth and power of patriarchal, capitalist elites. This was a far cry from the initial intentions of the feminist project: "All told, second-wave feminism espoused a transformative political project, premised on an expanded understanding of injustice and a systematic critique of capitalist society. The movement's most advanced currents saw their struggles as multi-dimensional, and simultaneously against economic exploitation, status hierarchy and political subjugation. To them, moreover, feminism appeared as part of a broader emancipatory project, in which the struggles against gender injustices were necessarily linked to struggles against racism, imperialism, homophobia and class domination, all of which required transformation of the deep structures of capitalist so-

ciety."[59] It bears repeating that, while Western feminisms were always diverse, a certain dominant liberal perspective (championed by organizations such as the National Organization of Women) infused the politics of the official delegations to the UN women's conferences between 1975 and 1985. This US government-sanctioned version of feminism looked at women's issues in isolation from their larger social, political or economic context; it was a feminism that focused on equality of opportunity within the existing economic structure, with an implicit or explicit acceptance of that structure as fundamentally just.

A recent legacy of this type of liberal feminism (what the socialists used to call "bourgeois feminism") can be found in *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013), by Facebook's chief operating officer, Sheryl Sandberg. Millions of copies have been sold of the book, which provides a hyper-individualized program for women to succeed in corporate America. Sandberg admonishes women to work harder, to get their partners to work harder, and to overcome their internalized gender roles. As Nancy Fraser notes, "Where feminists once criticised a society that promoted careerism, they now advise women to 'lean in.' A movement that once prioritised social solidarity now celebrates female entrepreneurs. A perspective that once valorised 'care' and interdependence now encourages individual advancement and meritocracy."[60] Sandberg is not likely to challenge the underlying structures of the economy; nor will she point out that the economic system is based on ever increasing inequality and exploitation, even if that exploitation predominantly affects women.

The stories of the women I tell in these pages deserve to be heard, not only because they have largely been forgotten, but also because these women championed a different vision of activism that continued to critique the structures of capitalist societies and couched women's issues within broader issues of social injustice, even as the liberal feminist strand became more dominant in the advanced capitalist countries. This liberal feminism focused narrowly on achieving rights that could exist without the public provision of social services for women (such as maternity leaves and childcare) by claiming that special state supports for women perpetuated inequality between men and women who should be treated as if they were biologically indistinguishable. The socialists recognized that men and women were different (specifically with regard to their childbearing capacities) and argued that equity between men and women could be achieved only by state intervention.[61] They further critiqued the specific

focus on equality as usually benefiting only a minority of elite women and that women's rights granted within a fundamentally unfair economic system could easily be reversed by future male leaders.

The advocacy efforts of women from the socialist world played an important role in the development of the global women's movements during the Cold War, and telling some of the women's individual stories and recuperating their perspectives might help contemporary liberal feminism free itself from its unfortunate attachment to the worst form of capitalism. Although these women were not perfect, and we should be careful not to ignore the ways they might have been complicit with authoritarianism in their own countries, we must admit that women living in the state socialist countries benefited from progressive legislation and equal rights far earlier than women in the Western democracies. Women's organizations in the East European countries also actively advocated for women's rights, both at home and abroad. Until the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet Union and its allies dominated the international discussion of women's issues at the United Nations and at their world congresses on women, organized and sponsored by the Women's International Democratic Federation.[62] Long before 1975, the WIDF had been a powerful vehicle for promoting the political interests of colonial and postcolonial countries around the world.[63] By the late 1960s, as new nations were born in Africa and Asia, women's rights had become a rallying cry of socialist and communist movements throughout the developing world as Eastern Bloc countries provided financial and logistical support to help set up state women's organizations based on the East European model, resulting in social, political, and economic gains for women across the globe. By producing a less lopsided version of this history, we can not only correct a historical misperception but can help to turn feminism back into the broader and more liberatory project it was designed to be.

Bulgaria and Zambia

The ideal way to write the story of state socialist women's activism would be to do a massive overview of all of the Eastern Bloc countries and their socialist allies in the Global South, but in these pages I focus on two case studies. Given the limitations of time and resources, this book examines the history of the United Nations women's conferences from the perspectives of Bulgaria and Zambia in the hope that their unique geopolitical positions can provide a glimpse into what an alternative historiography

FIGURE INTRO.6 WIDF office staff, 1985, East Berlin.

might look like. Although I initially started my research in Bulgaria because it was the post-socialist country I knew best, I was surprised to learn that the Bulgarian women's committee had been the de facto leader of the Eastern Bloc countries during the UN Decade for Women—and, indeed, that its president, Dr. Elena Lagadinova, had served as the general rapporteur for the conference in Nairobi.[64] Because Bulgaria was a small, recently poor, and largely agricultural country, it shared many structural characteristics in common with the newly emerging countries of the developing world. Bulgaria also claimed "postcolonial" status because it had been subsumed within the Ottoman Empire for five centuries. The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) used this history to strengthen its links with women in Africa and Asia.

The Bulgarian case provides one example of how a state socialist women's committee operated in practice, although I understand that in some respects the Bulgarian committee was exceptional. Compared with other state women's committees in the Eastern Bloc, the Bulgarians had more independent financing and autonomy. Their president for more than two decades was a national heroine—the youngest female partisan fighting

FIGURE INTRO.7
Elena Lagadinova, 2013.

against the Nazi-allied Bulgarian monarchy during World War II.[65] Furthermore, under the thirty-five-year rule of Todor Zhivkov, Bulgaria was a "soft socialist" country, with a less repressive apparatus than its northern neighbors in the Warsaw Pact.[66] In 1968, Zhivkov had taken tentative steps toward a more open society until the Prague Spring forced a cautious retreat.[67] Despite this, the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (sometimes also known as the Committee of Bulgarian Women (CBW) enjoyed new authority after 1968 with the power to propose legislation and take delinquent enterprises to court if they failed to grant maternity leaves or relocate pregnant women to less strenuous jobs.[68] Bulgaria also had a prominent female member of the Politburo, Tsola Dragoicheva,[69] and Sonya Bakish, the editor-in-chief of Bulgaria's state women's magazine, was the wife of the country's prime minister.[70] These powerful women made a crucial difference.

But aside from these specific details, the CBWM operated under constraints similar to those of the women's committees in other state socialist countries. Bulgaria was an authoritarian state with only two legal parties: the Bulgarian Communist Party and its junior partner, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. The state forbade independent organizations, and the CBWM monopolized women's issues. Most (but not all) leaders of the women's committee were members of the Communist Party and were

committed communists. They shared a suspicion of Western-style "bourgeois" feminism and tended to essentialize women's roles as mothers and caregivers. Finally, although they managed to pass legislation, they were not always capable of enforcing it. Despite their explicit powers of "societal control," they still faced a sometimes immovable socialist bureaucracy and a paranoid state security apparatus.

Although I am deeply cognizant of the varieties of state socialism and hesitant to homogenize the region, I believe that the experiences of the CBWM during the United Nations' International Women's Year and the subsequent Decade for Women can at least give us a small glimpse into the experiences of women on the other side of the Iron Curtain, even if these experiences are not perfectly generalizable. Women's committees in all state socialist countries focused more on expanding state entitlements for women and families than on trying to challenge patriarchal culture in the home. They were openly pronatalist in their policies and justified their activities in terms of larger Communist Party goals. Perhaps most significant, they operated in closed societies that violated political rights such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly. Bulgarians, like residents of other state socialist countries in the twentieth century, suffered surveillance by the secret police, shortages of consumer goods, and restrictions on travel. Finally, and most important, in the international arena, Bulgaria, like other countries in Eastern Europe, had to be mindful of the larger foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union. In these things, Bulgaria shared much in common with its Warsaw Pact brother countries.

Zambia represents a case study of a technically nonaligned country that in practice was aligned with the Eastern Bloc. Of course, one landlocked postcolonial African nation cannot represent the entirety of the socialist-leaning developing world. But Zambia presents an interesting case study because it achieved independence from Britain in 1964, and Kenneth Kaunda, the nation's first president, continued to rule Zambia until 1991. Kaunda's ideological vision consisted of an "African humanism" that concerned itself with earthly action and put people, not profits, at the center of government policy. Inspired by other secular humanist traditions, Kaunda and leaders like him rejected capitalism and parliamentary democracy as foreign imports into Africa, imposed during the colonial era to justify the exploitation of the local population.

Like many other countries emerging from colonialism, Zambia initially attempted to walk the path of democratic nonalignment. But eight un-

stable countries surrounded Zambia, many with ongoing civil wars between autochthonous populations and white settler colonialists. In 1972, Kaunda, fearing internal divisions instigated by external forces, rewrote the Zambian constitution and declared Zambia a "One Party Participatory Democracy." The constitution of Zambia's Second Republic banned all parties except for Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP). With Western Europeans and Americans supporting white, racist regimes such as those in Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, and South Africa, the Zambians eventually accepted generous Soviet aid to support and arm the independence fighters living in camps within Zambia's borders.

I chose Zambia as my second case study because, although nonaligned, it maintained robust contacts with women from the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe. After visiting Zambia and interviewing the leaders of the Zambian equivalent of the CBWM, I also learned that the UNIP Women's League had a similar structure as its Bulgarian counterpart and that the Zambian women's movement was state-based and discouraged independent women's organizing.[71] As in the Bulgarian case, the leader of the UNIP Women's Brigade (which later became the Women's League), Chibesa Kankasa, was a national heroine, a fighter for Zambian independence who served in the government for almost thirty years. My interviews and archival research made clear that Zambian women's activists benefited from Eastern Bloc material and logistical support between 1975 and 1985, a period that coincided with a veritable explosion of activities around women's issues in Zambia—issues that would lose prominence after 1991, when Kaunda allowed multiparty elections and fell from power.

Like Bulgaria's, Zambia's situation is unique, but I also believe that it can provide insight into the struggles of women's committees within countries of the Global South trying to navigate their way through the ever-mounting tensions of the Cold War. Rival superpower blocs competed for influence in the countries newly freed from colonialism and provided resources for a wide range of development projects. Perhaps the biggest losers of the collapse of communism in East Europe were the developing countries. In 1994, two American political scientists argued that the end of the Cold War would allow Western governments to reduce foreign aid for African countries experimenting with humanism-inspired socialism:

> From independence on, the Third World, especially the African part of it, played an undeservedly important role in international politics. The Third World countries set the West off against the East in

> a bidding war for their support. The West spent more than $225 billion to curry favor with often corrupt and incompetent and sometimes bloody tyrants. The West's guilt feelings over colonialism have ended, and even humanitarian aid is drying up. But the final blow to the Third World, especially to the African part of it, came with the termination of the cold war in 1989; the West will no longer have to support authoritarian regimes and socialist economies to keep them from going communist.[72]

Zambia happened to be one of the "socialist economies" that benefited from the "bidding war" between East and West, and this bidding war extended to women's issues. Countries such as Zambia became testing grounds for which economic system could better provide a postcolonial pathway to economic development and true liberation for women. This issue was particularly fraught in the context of southern Africa, where national self-determination and the oppressive system of apartheid in South Africa overshadowed "pure" women's issues. While the US Agency for International Development (USAID) supported women's "basic needs" (the name for a United Nations Development Program effort that emphasized the need to support a specific package of goods and services that included such things as clean water, shelter, education, and access to healthcare), Eastern Bloc countries such as Bulgaria supported Zambian women's demands to end institutionalized racism by arguing that attention to women's basic needs should include racial and sexual equality. In the war for the hearts and minds of the Global South, therefore, the Eastern Bloc often had the upper hand, and the steady loss of women in the developing world to the "communists" had a real impact on the global discourse on women's rights as debated at the United Nations during the Decade for Women. Furthermore, women from the Third World provided new ideas and strategies for women's organizing to their activist colleagues in the Eastern Bloc, and the circular exchange of information between the two groups strengthened their collective power at the UN.

There are many stories of women's activists that Western feminists have never heard of—women such as Elena Lagadinova, Maria Dinkova, Sonya Bakish, Ana Durcheva, Chibesa Kankasa, Lily Monze, and Senior Chieftainess Nkomeshya Mukamambo II. They fought for women's rights in their own way, using the rhetorical tools available to them within specific cultural and historical contexts. They may not have been "feminists" in the classic sense, since they did not prioritize women's interests above issues

FIGURE INTRO.8 Chibesa Kankasa, 1979 (far left).

of class or race or national self-determination (a position we might today call "intersectionality"). But they believed that women's issues were deeply embedded in larger political contexts. They saw no point in advocating for the equality of black men and women under a system of apartheid or for equal pay for equal work when the entire working class survived on less than subsistence wages. The socialists believed that women's equity with men required some form of state intervention and necessitated a structural change in an economic system that devalued reproductive labor and care work. They believed that rights extended to women within a fundamentally unjust system would benefit only a minority of women and could too easily be taken away. The politics of recognition, to use Nancy Fraser's phrase, should never take precedence over the politics of redistribution.

Part I of this book lays the groundwork for the careful reading of the UN Decade for Women that follows in part II. Chapter 1 deals with the theoretical literature on state feminism and the origins of the persistent stereotypes that color the dominant Western view of state socialist women's organizing. Chapters 2–4 examine the intersections of women and socialist discourses of emancipation in the Bulgarian, American, and Zambian contexts to give readers a necessary historical grounding in the differing situations of women in the lead-up to the International Women's Year. Although these chapters cover the same period of time, it is essential

to understand the specific domestic contexts in which women's activism took place, even if this means covering the same chronological ground more than once. Chapter 5 rewinds the clock once more to examine the geopolitics of the Cold War and the way countries such as Zambia found themselves sandwiched between rival superpowers. Part II turns to the specific preparations for the events of the International Women's Year and the subsequent UN Decade for Women. The chapters follow chronologically and narrate the history of the UN events from the perspective of Bulgarian and Zambian women, with occasional reflections on American reactions to the work of the state socialists. In the conclusion, I discuss the importance of remembering these stories as part of a political project to rescue feminism from its current role as handmaiden to neoliberalism.

In 2010, the historian Augusta Dimou exposed how German history textbooks written after 1989 obscured the European roots and international appeal of socialism and ignored "the massive impact of leftist intellectual influences on the articulation of the liberation movements in the third world, in spite of the fact that decolonization is a standard topic in history textbooks on the twentieth century."[73] Dimou argued that officials in the German government intentionally suppressed a history of the state socialist past that included perspectives beyond the usual tropes of totalitarianism—the secret police, travel restrictions, and consumer goods shortages. Recognizing the positive influence of the Eastern Bloc on struggles for national liberation means recognizing a positive legacy of state socialism in Eastern Europe, something that may feel politically dangerous in the current historical moment.

But academic freedom, a core principle of democratic societies, demands that intellectual inquiry remain independent of political manipulation. Intellectuals in communist countries once labored under the shackles of compulsory Marxism, a situation widely criticized by the advocates of freedom of thought and conscience. In 2018, it seems essential that researchers producing scholarship in the United States push back against the less visible, but no less binding, constraints of hegemonic neoliberalism. This does not require a wholesale rehabilitation of the state socialist past, nor a blindness to the real crimes and brutalities of twentieth-century communist regimes but, rather, a more nuanced examination of how some socialist ideals, including that of state-supported women's emancipation, shaped the course of our collective history for the better.

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Part I. Organizing Women under Socialism and Capitalism

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1. State Feminism and the Woman Question

In August 2010, I drove to the remote village of Gabarevo. I had scheduled an interview with a ninety-year-old Bulgarian woman named Krastina Tchomakova. She had worked for many years with the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) and attended the first United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975 as part of her country's official delegation. The problem with interviewing nonagenarians, however, is that time does not operate consistently across the generations. When I arrived at Tchomakova's cottage, she was sitting outside in her garden waiting for me in front of a huge pile of tomatoes, cucumbers, and green onions. After a friendly greeting, I understood that her nephew was preparing some fresh chicken in the kitchen.

"Please don't go to any trouble. I'm not hungry. It's too hot to eat," I explained in Bulgarian. "I would just like to ask you some questions about International Women's Year and your work with the Committee."

"It's not too hot to eat," she said. "I'm hungry. I want to eat salad." She slid a knife across the table toward me and pointed to a bowl.

Tchomakova was small and a bit hunched over. She wore a loose, light pink cotton smock and squinted her eyes at me. The heat blurred the air, and the nephew brought me a glass of water. Perhaps she would talk while I cut the vegetables, I thought, but I had no way of taking notes. I did not bring my digital recorder because I knew from previous experience that older Bulgarians spoke less freely when I recorded them. I sat down, pulled the cutting board toward me, and began chopping.

"Can you tell me about how you became interested in women's issues?" I said. I sliced an onion, and my eyes watered.

FIGURE 1.1 Krastina Tchomakova, 2010.

"The onions are fresh from my garden. Very tasty," she said.

"How did you come to work for the Committee?" I rubbed my eye with the back of my wrist.

She waved a hand. "After lunch. I'm hungry."

I had hoped to meet her for two hours, but she clearly wanted to make a day of it. I inquired again about her work for the women's committee. She discussed an aphid that attacked her tomatoes and the challenges of beekeeping. I asked about Mexico City. She told me about the medicinal uses of stinging nettles.

I considered aborting my mission, but I had come all this way. Tchomakova had memories of life in Bulgaria before World War II, and she was twenty-four years old when the Bulgarian communists came into power in 1944. Her mind seemed sharp, and she could tell me firsthand about the radical changes in women's lives during the forty-five-year communist era. She had lived through it all, and because of her work with the CBWM, she had played a part in realizing those changes. I understood the perils of oral history interviews with someone of her vintage; she might embellish accounts to make herself look good. Of course, Tchomakova would tell me things the way she remembered them, and I would be dealing with

her specific take on historical events. Like Akira Kurosawa's classic film *Rashomon*, the same tale could be told from many different points of view, and I would be getting only Tchomakova's version. But with two decades lived before communism, and two decades after, no one could have as rich a perspective as she. I was desperate to hear it. There were not too many Tchomakovas left in 2010.

I asked her another direct question about the International Women's Year, but she wanted to gossip about the other women I had interviewed. She chatted for another hour as we ate lunch, ignoring me. She complained about the state of Bulgaria and the corruption of contemporary politicians.

Almost two hours into our meeting, I finally got frustrated. "I would love to hear about your time in Mexico. Was 1975 the first time you visited that country?"

She stared at me, her eyes blank. I was about to pack my things when she sighed. "I was born in 1920, just three years after the Russian Revolution. And I hated that my brothers worked less than my sisters because we stayed at home while they went to school. I wanted to learn to read, too."

I took out my notebook.

"In Mexico, we showed the world what socialism could do for women," she continued and proceeded to speak uninterrupted for the next ninety minutes. She made my trip to Gabarevo well worth the effort.

After that first encounter, I met Tchomakova once more, in March 2012, and our two interviews helped me understand the behind-the-scene details of how the state socialist program for women's emancipation had worked on the level of individual lives. The vast majority of the scholarship I had read about women in the Eastern Bloc focused on the level of policy and implementation. It concentrated on the nonindependence of the women's committees and the ways in which the socialist project for solving the "woman question" differed from the efforts of first and second wave feminists in the Western democracies. But at ninety-two, Tchomakova told me a story about women's emancipation in Bulgaria from an eyewitness point of view. In her mind, one of the most important achievements of state socialism in her country was the progressive support given to women and families, support that was a fundamental component of her own socialist beliefs.

Krastina Tchomakova joined the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in 1938. She read the works of Marx and Engels in secret, dreaming of a different world than that of interwar Bulgaria. A tsar with fascist sympathies

ruled her country, and in 1941 the Bulgarian prime minister signed the Tripartite Pact and joined the Axis powers in World War II. In 1944, the local communists (supported by Moscow) overthrew their government—in a revolution or a coup d'état, depending on whom you asked. Tchomakova rose quickly through the Party ranks. Her early efforts focused on expanding educational opportunities for girls and teaching illiterate women to read. After a decade of working in the cities and villages surrounding Gabarevo, Tchomakova moved to Sofia to help organize women workers in the trade unions. Her passion for women's issues and her fierce loyalty to the BCP landed her a job at the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement. For twenty-seven years she worked in the CBWM, trying to put her socialist beliefs into practice. I had found letters written by Tchomakova in the Central State Archives and knew she was a fierce advocate for women's right to education and to join male-dominated professions. Tchomakova penned many impassioned missives to hold male political elites accountable to their own core principles regarding the woman question.

Tchomakova took her inspiration from a long line of socialist thinkers who proposed state-centric solutions to women's issues. Although women had been arguing for their rights since the days of the French Revolution, it was the German socialist August Bebel who published the impassioned tome *Woman and Socialism* in 1879.[1] In his exhaustive account of the history of women's subjugation, Bebel argued that private property and bourgeois monogamous marriage perpetuated women's oppression. Only with the overthrow of bourgeois property relations could women break the chains that bound them to men in a patriarchal system of domination. Written in the late 19th century, Bebel's vision of women living in socialist societies might have read like science fiction given the prevailing conditions of women's lives at the time:

> In the new society woman will be entirely independent, both socially and economically. She will not be subjected to even a trace of domination and exploitation, but will be free and man's equal, and mistress of her own lot. Her education will be the same as man's. . . . She chooses an occupation suited to her wishes, inclinations and abilities, and works under the same conditions as man. . . . She studies, works, enjoys pleasures and recreation with other women or with men, as she may choose or as occasions may present themselves. In the choice of love she is as free and unhampered as man. She woos

> or is wooed, and enters into a union prompted by no other considerations but her own feelings. This union is a private agreement, without the interference of a functionary, just as marriage has been a private agreement until far into the middle ages. Here Socialism will create nothing new, it will merely reinstate, on a higher level of civilization and under a different social form, *what generally prevailed before private property dominated society* [emphasis in original].[2]

The collective ownership of the means of production and the full incorporation of women into the labor force provided the first steps toward this egalitarian future. Bebel believed that women were the equals of men, but (long before the notion of social constructivism or gender performativity) he asserted that the conventions necessary to support the institution of private property proscribed women's roles in society. As a Bulgarian peasant growing up in interwar Bulgaria, Tchomakova (and women like her) understood firsthand how agrarian poverty limited opportunities for all Bulgarians, but especially girls.

Bebel's work inspired that of Friedrich Engels, and his book later excited the minds of countless young women who stumbled upon *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). For instance, Maria Dinkova was a journalist who served with Tchomakova as a member of the official delegation to Mexico City in 1975. Born in 1928, Dinkova was in her late teens when she first discovered socialist literature on the woman question. In the year after Bulgaria became a communist country, the new government mass-produced works of classic socialist theory and made them available to the population. Writing retrospectively in 2003, Dinkova described her first encounter with a work of nonfiction as something almost supernatural:

> I have spent a significant part of my life searching for statistical correlations among the particles, cells, and the elements of human society. Because of this, I have long held the conviction that the magical is intrinsic to the universe, to what we call a society, as well as to the life path of the individual. . . . Some of the most important things in my life have happened in a magical way. The first serious book (i.e., not a novel or a poetry collection) I bought, and that opened my eyes to scholarly literature, was *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Engels. I saw it inadvertently on a bookstand on a corner on a main street in Plovdiv in 1945, and I picked it up,

solely because of the intriguing title. I was only seventeen—a student dressed in her black apron—a little girl, but with a very famous work by a great pioneering teacher in her hands.

Engels kindled in me a permanent interest in the problematic issues of women and the family. After reading Engels, I started studying *Ancient Society* by Lewis Morgan . . . [and] surveyed Lily Braun's *The Woman Question* and August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. The fact that several years later I would have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the great women's revolution that was powerfully unraveling throughout the twentieth century was really magic: a coincidence of numerous fortuitous circumstances.[3]

Dinkova's autodidactic education on the woman question relied on these classic socialist texts. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels postulated that humankind once lived in a primitive communal matriarchy where all property was shared in common by large group families with women in charge.[4] The key to sexual equality among the hunters and collectors lay in women's economic contributions. Even if there existed a gendered division of labor, women's work was valued equally to men's in sustaining the extended family or clan. Engels proposed that the establishment of private property led to the final overthrow of the "mother right," precipitating the subjugation of woman. Where there is promiscuity in group marriage (or serial monogamy where parties are free to leave at any time), only maternity can be assured. To ensure that accumulated land and property passed to legitimate sons, Engels suggested that women's bodies became a form of private property. To protect their accumulated assets, wealthy men constructed the state, which in turn created laws and the means by which to enforce those laws: the police. Using the power of their new state, men ensured the fidelity of their wives with legal marriage contracts and penal codes criminalizing adultery (for women). Since women constituted the first class of people to be oppressed by private property, Engels argued, they had everything to gain from its overthrow, thus rendering women the natural allies of the communist cause.[5]

The German socialist Clara Zetkin built on the ideas of Bebel and Engels and believed that socialism was morally superior to capitalism because only the former could guarantee the full realization of women's talents and capabilities.[6] The Russian Alexandra Kollontai also became a strident advocate for women's rights, including a new sexual morality

FIGURE 1.2
Maria Dinkova, 1976.

that would free women from their economic dependence on men. Kollontai believed that love and sexuality should be completely untethered from economic considerations, comparing the "winged eros" of romantic relations between equals to the "wingless eros" of relationships between men and women determined by the laws of supply and demand.[7] But in a world without birth control, and steeped in thousands of years of patriarchal culture relegating women to the private sphere under the control of fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, how could women's emancipation be realized in practice? How could a poor peasant girl such as Krastina Tchomakova, born in rural Bulgaria to illiterate parents, ever rise up to become a member of an official diplomatic delegation to a United Nations conference halfway across the world?

Socialists argued that women needed to work together with men to overthrow bourgeois elites and that they should do this without creating separate, women-only organizations or movements. This penchant for working within the larger party structures derives from the initial debates during the First International Conference of Socialist Women in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1907. The congress occurred immediately before

the International Socialist Congress, and women delegates from fourteen countries attended the meeting. Fifty-eight women—in their long belle époque dresses, hats, and gloves—met to determine the future direction of the socialist movement's policy toward their working sisters. The agenda focused on uniting the socialist parties of Europe around the common cause of winning universal suffrage for women as part of the general campaign to gain voting rights for all workers. In her book on prerevolutionary women's activism, Rochelle Ruthchild argues that early twentieth-century Russian feminists were all socialists, and all socialists were feminists (in the sense that the two projects were indistinguishable from each other),[8] but elsewhere in Europe a deep chasm often separated the "bourgeois feminists" from the socialist women. In 1907, the German Social Democrats (led by Zetkin) demanded full suffrage for all women, but socialist representatives from Austria, Belgium, England, and France advocated for "qualified" women's suffrage, meaning that only wealthier, educated women would earn the right to vote.

According to Kollontai (at the time an exile from tsarist Russia), the English socialist delegates had fallen under the sway of "bourgeois feminists," and the French and Belgian socialists feared that universal women's suffrage would increase the power of the Catholic Church in democratically elected parliaments.[9] The German Social Democrats countered that equality between men and women was a fundamental principle of socialist doctrine, and therefore universal suffrage for men must be accompanied by universal suffrage for women. This would instantly double the political power of the working class. Zetkin's opponents from Britain and France believed that demanding universal suffrage for women would impede the possibility of winning limited suffrage for educated women. The German delegates argued that universal suffrage for women would be supported by increased efforts to educate them. Expanding literacy would give women access to socialist literature, and they could learn to vote in their own economic interests. On this matter, Zetkin and the German Social Democrats won the day, and the label "feminist" became associated with the position of the British and French women who had argued for limited suffrage.

Fear of being labeled "feminists" influenced the discussions of how socialists should organize their work among proletarian women. From the point of view of socialist women, feminists in the United States and the United Kingdom organized independently of broader social movements and too often concentrated on the narrow issue of voting rights. For socialists, the bourgeois feminists had little critique of the political and eco-

nomic system within which they lived, demanding only to be more fully embedded within capitalism as equal citizens with equal rights. Although this was a caricature of the complexity of Western women's movements (some of which had more comprehensive platforms for social change), it was a stereotype that shaped the ongoing conflicts between socialists and feminists for decades to come. Delegates to the First International Conference of Socialist Women in 1907, therefore, resisted the idea of independent women's organizations, claiming that these organizations would split the proletariat into rival camps and undermine class solidarity. The German Social Democrats, supported by Kollontai, argued that "an independent grouping of proletarian women *within the party* has clear organizational advantages. Such an organization would make it possible to concentrate the attention of the party on the specific needs and requirements of women workers, and would also make it easier to rally around the party the generally less aware female members of the proletarian class" [emphasis in the original].[10]

Kollontai also felt that proletarian men lacked understanding of the importance of women's issues for the broader socialist cause. In order to reach them, Kollontai believed that women needed to work alongside men, reminding them that true liberty for the proletariat required women's emancipation:

> In order to inculcate in their comrades the proper attitude to the question of equal rights for women workers in every sphere and draw them into the struggle to attain in practice equal civil rights for women, women have only one course—to unite their forces around the party. Women workers must set up a women's secretariat, a commission, a bureau within the party, not in order to wage a separate battle for political rights and defend their own interests by themselves but in order to exert pressure on the party *from within*, in order to compel their comrades to wage their struggle in the interests of the female proletariat as well.[11]

Thus, even before the Russian Revolution, and before any state was in control of implementing women's emancipation "from above," socialist women conceived that a separate women's bureau working *within* a socialist (or communist) party would guarantee that progressive men took women's issues seriously and that working as part of the Party (to "exert pressure" on their male comrades from inside the rank and file) provided the best avenue for achieving women's emancipation.

In the years following the Stuttgart conference, the mobilization of socialist women in Europe expanded dramatically. According to Kollontai, the German Social Democratic Party had ten thousand women members in 1907, but this number grew to eighty-two thousand in 1910, an increase of 720 percent.[12] By 1910, the women's newspaper *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) enjoyed a circulation of eighty thousand. In the same year, the Second International Conference of Socialist Women convened in Copenhagen on August 26–27, just before the Eighth International Congress of the Second International. It was here that Tchomakova's foremothers tried to create a practical program to realize their vision of women's emancipation.

The fourth point on the socialist women's agenda laid down the basis for all subsequent socialist policies regarding state responsibilities toward women workers.[13] Under the title "Social Protection and Provision for Motherhood and Infants," the women of the Second International demanded an eight-hour working day and a prohibition on the labor of children younger than fourteen. They argued that pregnant women should have the right to stop work (without previous notice) eight weeks before delivery, and should enjoy paid "motherhood insurance" (i.e., maternity leave) of eight weeks if the child lived, which could be extended to thirteen weeks if the mother was willing and able to nurse the infant. Women would be paid for a six-week leave in the case of stillborn children, and all working women would enjoy these benefits, "including agricultural laborers, home workers and maid servants."[14] To support women's dual function as workers and mothers, these policies would be paid for by the permanent establishment of a special maternity fund out of tax revenues.

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, Vladimir Lenin, Kollontai, and other Bolsheviks initially strove to put many of these policies into practice.[15] For his part, Lenin objected to Kollontai's proposals for a new communist sexual morality, but he did believe that women's domestic work should be socialized. Instead of burdening individual women with household chores and childcare, the Soviet state proposed to build kindergartens, crèches, and public canteens and laundries.[16] By 1919, the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party passed one of Kollontai's resolutions calling for an increase of the Party's specific work among women. She secured a state commitment to increase socialized facilities to alleviate women's domestic responsibilities.[17] The year 1919 also saw the creation of the Zhenotdel, a special women's section established within the Central Committee of the Communist Party that emerged from the earlier Women's Bureau formed after the Revolution.[18] Kollontai believed that the

new communist state would remain committed to the woman question as long as women worked within the Party to prod reluctant male comrades in the correct direction.

But enthusiasm for women's emancipation soon evaporated in the face of more pressing economic and military issues, especially the civil war. In her book *The Baba and the Comrade* (1997), historian Elizabeth Wood detailed the trials and tribulations of the Zhenotdel and its inability to overcome Party hostility to its work. Even though solving the women's question was seen as a fundamental goal of the revolution, there was always a problem of separating out women's issues from the pressing challenges of class inequality. Soviet leaders had no interest in promoting feminism, because "feminism," as it was known at the time in both its Western European and Russian variations, was considered suspect as the ideology of upper-class women who strove to further their own interests without concern for general social injustices and inequities.[19] Indeed, Wendy Goldman argues that many former Zhenotdel activists were among the most vociferous supporters of its demise, because they preferred to work on the woman question as part of the other "general work" of the party.[20]

But Wood also argues that while the Party agreed to create the Zhenotdel to support its larger revolutionary goals, and to provide an incentive for the greater participation of women in the Party's work, for a brief moment the Zhenotdel forged ahead with its own agenda: "[More] and more of their staff members began to make demands on women's behalf and to criticize the regime for its failings. Not surprisingly, the party leaders did not react well to these criticisms and grasped at the nearest weapon to quiet the women's section activists. The weapon they chose was the one most feared by the activists themselves, the charge of 'feminist deviationism.' This charge, leveled in 1923 together with other coercive measures, effectively forced the sections to take a more obedient and less independent stance."[21] Thus, even before Lenin's death in 1924, and despite some successes at improving women's education and reimagining Soviet tropes of womanhood, the Zhenotdel became a more docile vehicle for the Party's work among Soviet women. The ideas and programs proposed by Kollontai and her colleagues were ignored or resisted, as the Party focused instead on industrial and military development. Stalin dissolved the organization in 1929, supposedly because all of its tasks had been completed and the woman question solved. Lenin's successor ushered in an era of renewed conservatism and restored traditional patriarchy, reversing many of the early gains for women.[22]

Despite the Zhenotdel's ultimate failure to represent women's interests, it is fascinating that its structure so closely resembled the one imagined in the discussions of the women of the Second International. Indeed, this model of the state women's committee or section working within the Party would serve as a template for the establishment of later committees and leagues in the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe and their allies (such as Zambia) in the developing world, although there would be many local variations. But because the Soviet Union was the first and most powerful country in the communist world, the failure of the Zhenotdel in the 1920s tainted the view of all subsequent socialist women's committees.

My curiosity about the Zhenotdel, and the way it is remembered in the international history of women's movements, led me to Gregory Massell's *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (1974).[23] The book, one of the first by a Western-trained scholar using primary Soviet sources to investigate women's issues behind the Iron Curtain, provided an intimate look at the operations of the Zhenotdel in Central Asia and its program of what contemporary Croatian feminist Slavenka Drakulić derides as "emancipation from above."[24] Massell explored how Soviet activists targeted Muslim women and how women's emancipation from oppressive local patriarchal norms became a substitute for the revolutionary politics of the working class, which hardly existed in rural Central Asia. Soviet leaders imagined that the emancipation of women would lead to a fundamental reorganization of traditional society, preparing the way for a new socialist consciousness in everyday life.

Massell's book documents the massive failures of this women's revolution from above and the impotence of the Zhenotdel to protect radicalized and emancipated Muslim women from the backlash of their local communities, where patriarchal authority proved impervious to communist modernization narratives. Massell also shows how the Zhenotdel collaborated with the sometimes violent state campaign to liberate Central Asian women in spite of themselves and how powerless the women's organization was to effect any real local change. Furthermore, women's emancipation was not sought as an end in itself aimed at "enhancing women's individuality or increasing their choices."[25] Rather, it proved a byproduct of the state socialists' need for women's labor in countries undergoing rapid industrialization.

But Massell minces no words in pointing out that women in Central Asia were little better than chattel in the early twentieth century. Yes, the

Soviets wanted to crush the local Central Asian elites and modernize the "backward" parts of its empire, but it was not merely Soviet propaganda that Muslim women were oppressed. For the women of the Zhenotdel, Massell shows that the emancipation of Muslim women took on a crusade-like fervor. They understood that their actions served larger party goals, but they also abhorred the material conditions of Central Asian women's lives. They sincerely believed that the new Soviet state had the power to liberate women.

Furthermore, according to Massell, many local Muslim women welcomed the Soviet program for their emancipation and would have benefited from more (rather than less) state intervention on their behalf. In the Central Asia of the 1920s, emancipation from below was all but impossible. Most women were illiterate, uneducated, and controlled by men. To the extent that Massell judges the experiment with revolution from above a failure, he does so by recognizing that administrative decrees and legal reforms were not enough to undo centuries of local tradition regarding the role of women in society. The desperate measures taken by the Soviets to enforce women's liberation (e.g., public de-veiling) spawned a violent backlash that created a local and coordinated resistance to Soviet modernization programs.

The most fascinating passage from Massell's book comes almost four hundred pages into the text, providing an important glimpse onto the role of the Zhenotdel vis-à-vis the central Stalinist state. On December 10, 1928, Lenin's widow, Nadezhda Krupskaia, delivered a keynote address to the Fourth All-Union Zhenotdel Conference of Party Organizers among Eastern Women in Moscow. Massell describes the scene as a tense one, with Krupskaia (at great risk to her own personal safety) delivering a speech critical of Stalinism and his heavy-handed methods in front of an audience filled with "Stalin's henchmen."[26] Krupskaia deployed language that "very few (if any) Soviet communists could have dared to use under such circumstances."[27] Massell marvels at Krupskaia's unwillingness to embrace Stalinist tropes: "Her discussion of the issues at stake was singularly free of stereotyped ideological references to class conflict, or to counterrevolutionaries, deviationists, saboteurs, and other alleged enemies of the people."[28] Massell continues:

> While Krupskaia's address was for the most part cautiously worded, and was replete with vaguely assenting references to the current party line, its crucial segments bore all the marks of an intellectual and

> moral crisis. Lenin's widow in effect rejected some of the most important premises underlying the notion of a revolution from above. She rejected a revolution by administrative command, especially when it involved a sweeping, dogmatic, and ruthless assault on human communities and sensibilities. Hers was, quite obviously, a plea for gradualism, and for toleration of a modicum of social and cultural pluralism. It was an urgent plea for respect for, and sensitive adaptation to, local conditions and peculiarities.[29]

That Krupskaia used the Zhenotdel congress as a forum to discuss an alternative paradigm for work among women and ethnic minorities, in public view of Stalin's paranoid agents, suggests that perhaps the goals of achieving women's emancipation took precedence over toeing the Party line. Krupskaia recognized that Stalin's heavy-handed method failed to yield real results for Muslim women, and may have even worsened the material conditions of their lives. But Krupskaia's speech reminds us that even during the Stalinist era, women's activists may have nurtured alternative visions of how to implement their goals, particularly with regard to including grassroots input from local women.

But these nuances were lost when Western women started writing about Eastern Bloc women's organizations during the Cold War. The failure of the Zhenotdel came to symbolize the failures of state socialist women's organizing and their emphasis on working within the Party to promote "emancipation from above." Feminists demanded independent women's organizations working outside the established political parties and state bodies. For example, in an interview conducted in 2011, Maria Dinkova recounted a conversation she had with an American feminist in the 1980s. Dinkova was discussing her role as a women's activist in the CBWM, but her American interlocutor was skeptical:

> She wanted to know if I was a volunteer or whether I was paid by the state to advocate for women's issues. She seemed to think that you could only be a feminist if you were a volunteer. I told her that I was paid by the state, but that if I was not paid by the state I would be a volunteer. I told her that I was lucky to have a state that would pay me to do the work that I wanted to do. But she said that you could not change the state if you were part of the state.[30]

Similarly, Ana Durcheva, a member of the CBWM who served as the treasurer of the Women's International Democratic Federation in East Ger-

many in the 1980s, also complained that Western women discredited the work of her organization because it was affiliated with the East German state and received funding from the governments of socialist countries around the world, including the Soviet Union. In March 2012, she explained that she grew exasperated with the Western feminist valorization of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): "I would say, 'Sorry, we are not an independent organization. Our organizations are state organizations.' That's how it worked in our countries. Different countries have different ways of doing things. We did good work for women around the world. It is the work that should matter, right?"[31] Tchomakova, too, believed that the domestic successes of the CBWM (discussed in the next chapter) hinged on their ability to propose legislation and to review all laws affecting women and families from inside the state.

But state socialist women's organizing continues to be derided in the West. In the liberal feminist literature on women's movements, state-based women's activism (in which women are *employees* of the state) is analytically referred to as "state feminism."[32] According to Amy Mazur and Dorothy McBride, the term "state feminism" entered American academic and policy-making parlance in the 1980s, originating out of the experience of women working successfully within Scandinavian national contexts.[33] When applied to Western democracies, the term names a particular arrangement whereby women integrate themselves into established corridors of power. But Western German sociologists had earlier deployed the same phrase to describe women's organizing in the German Democratic Republic. The West Germans "criticized established women's agencies and party-sponsored groups as a way of controlling women and co-opting women's movements, rather than encouraging an autonomous approach to women's rights."[34]

Thus, while state feminist projects could be efficacious in the West, scholars often considered them detrimental to women's organizing in the state socialist East and the Global South. In 1978, the political scientist Barbara Wolfe Jancar wrote, "The inability of women in Communist societies to organize independently clearly hampers female political participation. The national women's committees cannot be said to represent women."[35] Jancar's book, *Women under Communism* (1978), and a dissertation by the American political scientist Sharon Wolchik,[36] were the first studies that attempted a sustained examination of the inner workings of communist women's organizations across the Eastern Bloc. In both cases, the texts were written before the critical interventions of postcolonial

studies, and it was Western-trained political scientists who were defining the "appropriate" goal of a true feminist movement: the emancipation of women as autonomous, individual subjects. Jancar writes, "The fact of the matter is that in no Communist country do we find policies toward women—or men for that matter—directed at their self actualization."[37]

Jancar does not explain this concept of self-actualization other than to say that the goals of feminism have entered a new stage: "The question [of feminism] is not how to better one's material standard of living, but how to improve the quality of one's life," and that "the current women's movement in the United States exemplifies this new stage."[38] Presumably, Jancar's use of the term "self-actualization" grows from the work of the psychologist Abraham Maslow and his famous hierarchy of needs. Maslow published his hierarchy in *Motivation and Personality* (1954), where physiological needs such as food and shelter form the base of the pyramid.[39] Once these needs are met, people seek safety, love and belonging, and esteem. Self-actualization (some kind of individualist and often spiritual fulfillment of one's inherent potential) represents the tip of the pyramid, supposedly the most advanced human need, which can be fulfilled only when all of the previous needs have been met. Betty Friedan also used the term "self-actualization" in *The Feminine Mystique*, claiming that American women were trapped at the lowest level of the pyramid and needed opportunities to seek self-actualization through work outside the home. Maslow's hierarchy has been criticized for being too ethnocentric because it valorizes a kind of hyper-individualism that is uncommon in more communally oriented societies,[40] but Jancar followed Friedan and asserted that the pursuit of self-actualization must be the primary goal of a feminist movement. Since mass women's organizations focused more on material needs and collective action than on self-actualization, they were not considered "feminist" in the liberal conception of the word.[41]

So one problem with the persistent stereotypes of state socialist women's organizations is that they emerge from a liberal feminist politics that is universalistic and insensitive to cultural variation in women's definitions of "self-actualization." For example, in her study of the Egyptian women's mosque movement, the anthropologist Saba Mahmood argued that pious Islamic women find self-actualization through practicing the affects and comportments necessary to embody the form of submission that they deem appropriate for women.[42] These Egyptian women embrace a politics of submission and use their shared commitment to the Islamic feminine ideal as the basis for public action, thus leading Mahmood to question the

feminist valorization of the emancipated political subject. If pious Muslim women embracing their headscarves can be feminist agents, then why not communist women who willingly trade individual political rights for a centralized state that endeavors to provide basic needs for all?

Expanding on Mahmood's work, the anthropologist Amy Borovoy, a scholar of Japan, and I argued that feminist political projects need not only concern themselves with the creation of individual, autonomous political subjects.[43] The idea that women's so-called self-actualization requires them to be liberated from social obligations reifies a particular conception of women's emancipation. If self-actualization is about improving "the quality of one's life," then women may decide that improving the material conditions of their families or communities or even states is an important part of their own sense of self-fulfillment. Relevant here are the critiques of Maslow's ethnocentrism and Friedan's white, middle-class biases. Western liberal feminism may assume a subject position that is linked to the specific Anglo-American historical context.

A second set of issues with the received wisdom about state socialist women's organizations is that it privileges independent NGOs over state-based policy agencies and women's mass organizations, even when there is clear evidence of the latter's significant achievements in terms of women's literacy, education, legal equality, reproductive rights or incorporation into the labor force (all achievements contributing to women's "self-actualization"). If these achievements are grudgingly recognized, they are quickly discredited because they came from the "top-down" rather than from the "bottom-up." For example, McBride and Mazur argue:

> Women's policy machinery will reach high levels of state feminism, on the one hand, when the state is defined as a site of social justice and has the structural capacity to institutionalize new demands for equality, and on the other, when society sustains widely supported feminist organizations that challenge sex hierarchies through both radical politics from outside and reform politics in unions and parties. . . . If these conditions do not exist, then although politicians may establish women's policy offices, these units will have a hard time either influencing women's equality policy or empowering women's interests in society or both. As the contrasting case of Poland shows, when feminist organizing is absent and the state is impervious to democratic influence, women's policy machinery may even be used as a tool for authoritarian control.[44]

It is perhaps this connection with the state that allows Western liberal feminists to write socialist women's organizations out of the history of the international women's movement. For instance, in their book *Comparative State Feminism*, Mazur and McBride (writing as Dorothy McBride Stetson) use the one case of communist Poland to argue that state feminism is only effective and desirable when there are independent women's organizations operating outside of the formal structures of the state. And yet if one reads Jean Robinson's chapter on Poland, it appears that the Liga Kobiet, although constrained by its dependence on the Communist Party, was able to influence women's equality policy and empower women's interests in society.[45] Although Robinson agrees that an "independent civil society" is necessary for successful state feminism, she acknowledges that the Liga Kobiet, in its efforts to protect abortion and introduce sex education into schools, opposed both the Polish state and the Catholic Church and that this did "suggest that the [Liga Kobiet] was more than merely a propaganda tool for the party."[46]

Outside Eastern Europe, the British sociologist Maxine Molyneux studied women's organizations in socialist countries such as Cuba, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and Yemen during the 1970s and 1980s. Although Molyneux emphasized that state-based women's organizations justified their programs in terms of larger party goals, her extensive research positions their failures and achievements in historical and sociopolitical context. For instance, Molyneux accepted that legal equality and incorporation into the formal labor force never completely eradicated patriarchy at the domestic level, and state socialist women's committees often pushed pronatalist policies and reinforced women's primary responsibility for household labor. Yet unlike Jancar, Molyneux had no interest in imposing Western feminist standards on women's movements in the developing world. In 1977, Molyneux traveled to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) to study how women's position had evolved since their independence from the British a decade earlier. Molyneux interviewed local leaders of the Yemeni Women's Union, the state socialist women's organization.[47] In her introduction to these interviews, Molyneux provided important contextualization for the Western reader:

> As in all such socialist countries, it is often extremely difficult to discern what is really happening behind the official claims, and a degree of defensive evasiveness characterizes the responses to even sympathetic western investigators. Yet in the PDRY as in Cuba, Vietnam and

> China, it is evident both that there have been substantial changes in the position of women as a result of the revolution, and that there are major areas which state policy has left untouched, and where the conception of women's emancipation being implemented is, by western feminist-socialist criteria, a partial one. Yet whilst it is possible and necessary to criticize the Yemeni process for being incomplete, such criticisms must be made within a framework of what is, and what is not, possible in these very poor, beleaguered countries.[48]

Molyneux further explained that the progress of the women's movement in the PDRY could not be compared with women's movements in the United States or the United Kingdom, where women struggled against different cultural and political obstacles. Instead, she insisted that the PDRY should be compared with other developing countries—particularly, other Arab countries—and specifically with North Yemen. Molyneux asserted that despite a stronger economy and a pro-Western political orientation, the government of North Yemen had made little effort to improve the legal, social, or economic position of its women, and in this context, the women of South Yemen had made considerable progress. She finished with a pointed warning: "When evaluating this material it is therefore important to recognize the dangers of unconsciously transporting the assumptions and expectations of the western women's movement to a very different society, and thereby underestimating many of the real gains that have been made and the many real difficulties which are being faced."[49]

In a later book, Molyneux revisited the question of state socialist women's organizations and their relative efficacy, providing a balanced retrospective on what the state socialist countries did and did not achieve for women.[50] Discussing both the former state socialist societies of Eastern Europe and former and existing societies in the developing world, Molyneux investigated some of the tensions inherent in state socialism's policies toward women's emancipation:

> Yet if state socialism was a failure in terms of its goals, the claims its rulers made about the changes it had wrought were more than mere rhetoric: communist parties presided over some of the most dramatic and widespread attempts at social change in modern times. . . . As a result of the policies adopted by communist states, women's socio-economic position was radically transformed: under communist party rule women acquired new rights and obligations; they en-

> tered the public realm in substantial numbers, as workers and political actors; they attain similar, if not superior, levels of education to men; and the family was modernized and placed on a foundation of legal equality between the sexes. On any conventional definition of progress, let alone one based on feminist criteria, as far as the situation of women was concerned, the communist states merit some recognition.[51]

This demand for recognition was even more important for countries in the Global South, where a vast gulf existed between the status of women in the capitalist states versus those in the communist states. In the less-developed countries that pursued a state-led path to economic development, Molyneux argued that women "obtained greater legal equality, access to health, education at all levels and practical support for entry into employment."[52] She also surveyed the record of communist countries in outlawing traditional practices that reinforced women's subordinate position in society: the banning of foot binding in China, the eradication of divorce by repudiation and female genital cutting in South Yemen, and the ending of women's seclusion in Central Asia.

Despite failing to live up to all of their promises, Marxist-Leninist parties, wherever revolutionary governments came to power, granted women full legal equality, expanded literacy campaigns, promoted education and professional training, and encouraged full labor force participation. Although these policies supported the central socialist goals of rapid economic development and modernization (which required women's productive and reproductive labor and often resulted in the notorious "double burden") women enjoyed more rapid material improvements in the state socialist countries of the developing world. This resulted directly from ideological commitments to women's emancipation and the state's empowerment of women's organizations to achieve these aims. According to Molyneux, "Women's organizations, controlled by the ruling party, were given some scope for furthering the policy aims of the party with respect to women and provided 'women's issues' with some visibility and legitimacy. As a consequence, it could be claimed with some accuracy that in such developing communist states, women suffered less publicly sanctioned discrimination on the basis of sex than did those in comparable capitalist states."[53]

Furthermore, Molyneux challenged the uncritical Western feminist preference for autonomous women's organizing, asking whether advocacy

for women's gender interests needed to be linked exclusively to any one organizational form. Molyneux recognized that "autonomous organizations" (those groups of women advocating through independent actions) constituted the organizational form "that is most closely identified with feminist definitions of women's movements."[54] She saw that this feminist definition of a proper "women's movement" ignored a vast array of women's activism that had been successful in helping women achieve their strategic gender interests in different national contexts. In her seminal article "Analysing Women's Movements" (1998), Molyneux asked:

> What do we do with the women's organizations and their sizeable memberships in the existing and former socialist states? These are usually excluded from being considered women's movements on the grounds of autonomy, if not on the grounds of interests. Yet they deserve consideration in order to evaluate their significance both as political phenomena and for what they signify for their participants. . . . Women's interests cannot be "read off" from the organisational form in which they are expressed; the mere fact of an organisation's autonomy or internal organisational structure does not indicate that it is a privileged vehicle for the expression of women's interests nor, indeed, that it is entirely free from authority, either internally with respect to the organisation concerned or with regard to external influence.[55]

Less than a decade later, the Chinese historian Wang Zheng picked up Molyneux's torch, critiquing the limited "intellectual parameters of feminist scholars" in her examination of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF).[56] Zheng questioned the idea that the ACWF was merely an organ of the Chinese Communist Party. She posited that, although they worked within the system, Chinese women challenged the patriarchal order using the language of communism as an ideological tool:[57] "The lack of desire or imagination to excavate women's role in the policy making process in the socialist state may have much to do with a fast-held assumption about the socialist state: it is too centralized and monolithic to have any space for women's intervention."[58] Through a careful discourse analysis of the ACWF's publications, Zheng demonstrated that the women's activists intentionally deployed Communist Party language to promote pro-women policies. Because of the continued suspicion of bourgeois feminism, Chinese women's activists claimed that their work supported state goals, even as they used those goals as a cloak for their own agendas.

In my research on Bulgaria, I found many examples of how the CBWM published articles critical of the government under cover of Communist Party rhetoric. The problem with this strategy is that subsequent historians or activists fail to place these articles in their proper political context and take the communist rhetoric literally, as proof of slavish devotion to male party elites. For example, in an article critical of the CBWM published in 1992, the Bulgarian scholar Roumyana Slabakova asserted that the CBWM was a "key totalitarian organization" by quoting the language it used to justify its existence as a separate mass organization: "Ever since the victory of the socialist revolution in Bulgaria in 1944 the Committee of Bulgarian Women has had the basic task of rallying round the policy of the government, of the Front for the Fatherland, and of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and of involving [members] in [implementing] the main tasks the development of society [calls for] at all stages."[59] Slabakova undermined the value of the extensive sociological research undertaken by the Committee to support its policy agendas, discussing nothing about the content of this research and pointing instead to the arrangement of names in the bibliography. Because Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Todor Zhivkov were placed above the alphabetized list of references, Slabakova claimed, the analysis and conclusions of these studies could not be trusted.

Following Zheng's work, however, one could read these sources less dogmatically. If the Committee and the articles it published were pursuing policies or programs that might be construed as bourgeois feminist, the prominent citation of Marx and Engels might work to ensure that their research was not censored. Moreover, citing Marx and, especially, Engels reminded their male Party colleagues that women's issues were a core concern of communism's ideological fathers and could not be ignored. The key idea here is that a significant disjuncture might exist between what state socialist women's committees did and what they said they were doing when they explained their actions to their male comrades. According to a quote widely attributed to Margaret Mead, "What people say, what people do, and what people say they do are entirely different things." In much the same way that the now independent feminist NGOs frame their programs around donors' priorities, state women's organizations had to negotiate the political constraints of their various one-party states. Women such as Krastina Tchomakova and Maria Dinkova worked within the political constraints of the world they inhabited. Indeed, many socialist women framed their activism in terms that might make them seem subservient to the male party elite. But what if more was going on behind the scenes?

2. A Brief History of Women's Activism in Domestic Political Context

On July 1, 2011, I interviewed Pavlina Popova, a journalist who worked at *Zhenata Dnes* (The Woman Today), the official magazine of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM), from 1970 to 1981. She had also served as the head of an informal section of the Journalists Union, reporting on issues of women and the family. We met in front of the National Library in Sofia on a warm day and agreed to walk to the café of the Artists Union on Shipka Street. As we strolled, she smiled at me and said in English, "Bulgaria was the most progressive country in terms of maternity leaves and family policy among the socialist countries."

"And not the Soviet Union?" I said.

She laughed. "Yes. The Bulgarian Politburo was angry, and the Soviet Politburo was also angry. Bulgaria had no right to be that far ahead of the Soviet Union on anything."

We found an outside table, and I asked her to tell me about her background.

"I am from Sofia and I graduated in journalism. I spent three years working for the magazine *Nov Zhivot* [New Life] in Kurdjali. This was my mandatory national service after graduation."

"And then you came back to Sofia?"

"Yes, and I worked for a magazine here before I started for *Zhenata Dnes*."

So how did she end up at *Zhenata Dnes*? She told me that she had submitted an article for the magazine, and the editor-in-chief had been impressed. Sonya Bakish had been a member of the editorial collective since 1958 and served as its editor-in-chief for seventeen years.[1] Born in 1925,

Bakish was the Jewish Bulgarian wife of Stanko Todorov, a member of the Politburo and the longest-serving prime minister of Bulgaria. As editor, Bakish determined to make the magazine relevant to real Bulgarian women. Beginning in 1965, she hired a team of young journalists who believed that, while socialism had solved some of women's problems, it had created a host of new ones, particularly for new urban residents cut off from their traditional family networks.[2] Bakish had hired Maria Dinkova, and after she read Popova's article, she immediately invited Popova also to work for the magazine as a member of the editorial board. But Popova was not a member of the Bulgarian Communist Party. "This would have been a problem in a lot of other magazines or newspapers," Popova said. "But Sonya made me a member of the editorial college [board] almost immediately. Only Party members were supposed to be able to join the editorial college [board], but Sonya was a very strong personality and took a lot of personal initiatives."

Popova stayed on under Bakish until her retirement in 1980. When Eleonora Turlakova became the new editor-in-chief of *Zhenata Dnes* in 1981, she kept Popova on the board for almost an entire year before Popova was forced to resign because of her lack of Party membership. Yet for more than a decade, Popova had served as the key contact person between the magazine and the experts for family planning and demographic issues in the Council of Ministers. During the communist era, journalists were highly trained and respected and were often experts in their fields. I guessed that Popova was well informed about women's issues to be allowed to coordinate with the Council of Ministers as a nonmember of the Communist Party. She was also in charge of responding to readers' letters.

Reflecting on her eleven years at the magazine, Popova claimed that *Zhenata Dnes* was a "factory of ideas."

"Can you give an example?" I asked.

"Well, the idea of the 'second shift' for women. It was the first time in this country that anyone actually thought about this. It was very difficult for women at the time, to have a job, to have children, and [to deal with] men with a very Oriental attitude. All Bulgarian women understood this problem, but no one had a name for it. When they wrote this article on the second shift, it was something everyone understood. This idea of the second shift was born in *Zhenata Dnes*. It was there that the journalists were thinking about real women's problems. We were not great writers. We were not the most erudite journalists. But we had a huge social impact. We were doing something."

"But how? Weren't your articles being read by censors?"

"We criticized the government, but we did it in very subtle ways. I wrote something that was critical of the government, and Sonya told me that I had to use euphemisms. Sonya taught me how to use the words 'somewhere' and 'someone' strategically. To always write euphemistically. The smart people could figure it out, and the others wouldn't be able to catch on. They would let it pass, because they would read things literally. They didn't catch on. But we knew our readers would understand the euphemism. This was one of the benefits of working for a magazine like *Zhenata Dnes*."

Dinkova had told me that *Zhenata Dnes*'s "second shift" article got the magazine in trouble because the censors thought the title implied that women were working more than eight hours a day at their formal jobs, something that would have put Bulgaria in violation of a treaty with the International Labor Organization. The censors in the Central Committee had only looked at the title; they had not read the article and thus did not realize that "second shift" referred to women's domestic duties in the home. Once Bakish explained this, *Zhenata Dnes* was allowed to publish the article.

Bakish also encouraged her journalists to write about sexual issues that had never before appeared in the pages of *Zhenata Dnes*. Popova told me, "The Central Committee was absolutely opposed to talking about sex. They said, 'Soon you will be teaching young girls how to take their panties down.'"

Like Lenin before them, the communist authorities felt uncomfortable with sexuality and considered the topic a "bourgeois" concern.[3] But the response to the articles from the public was very positive, and despite the objections of the censors in the Central Committee, Bakish persisted. According to Popova, *Zhenata Dnes* was the only publication in Bulgaria discussing these issues, and these articles further expanded the magazine's readership.

"Were any of them censored?"

Popova shrugged. "Of course. You know, we didn't have press freedom here. The biggest problem with being a journalist at that time was that if you criticized one person in the Party, you were seen to be criticizing the entire Communist Party, the Eastern Bloc, the Soviet Union, and Marx and Engels and Lenin." Popova sighed. "It was a bad part of living at that time. Sonya Bakish was a very powerful person and she stood behind her journalists. But we were always talking about these things in secret, hid-

ing our opinions. We were not allowed to criticize anyone. Whatever we wrote went straight to the Central Committee. We could not write what we wanted then. All of that work was so interesting to me, we had such social experiences, but we were also being put through the wringer of communism."

Popova watched me writing in my notebook and said, "I am not saying everything was bad. There were so many good things done for women and the family."

I asked her whether she had worked closely with Krastina Tchomakova and the other women in the CBWM. "Sonya gave me no time to work on anything but the magazine. We received about a thousand letters a month, and Sonya wanted every single letter to have a reply from the editorial staff."

Popova once kept a ledger with a record of every letter received, and told me that their number steadily increased throughout her eleven years at the magazine. In 1980, Bakish hired two young assistants to help Popova respond to all of the mail, but for the entire 1970s Popova did it alone.

"What did women write about?" I asked. "So many things," she answered. "There was no psychotherapy in Bulgaria, and people did not have a place to share their problems. *Zhenata Dnes* became the psychotherapist of the nation. It was the only place where people could complain and get an answer. People had no one to talk to about their problems, and there were many problems, the ordinary problems of life. Complete strangers wrote to the magazine because they thought that we understood."

These letters to the editors became an important part of the identity of the magazine and provided a quasi-democratic forum for Bulgarian women to express their thoughts and opinions, allowing them to weigh in on social issues and feel that they were part of a broader national community of women. Popova told me the story of a young Bulgarian man who wrote a letter to *Zhenata Dnes* to explain that he was heartbroken because his girlfriend said she would not wait for him when he left for his mandatory two-year military service. The young man asked for tips on how to keep his girlfriend during his conscription, and the magazine received five boxes of letters from concerned readers offering sympathy and advice. Popova also explained that at some point the editorial board decided to get rid of the magazine's fashion pages. So many letters arrived that Bakish reinstated them, even though she worried that they fueled accusations that the magazine was "bourgeois."

"The Bulgarians are graphomaniacs!" Popova said.

One of the downsides of Popova's job was reading semiliterate letters: "I wanted to publish a humor column about the stupidest letters that we received. But Sonya wouldn't let me. She thought it was cruel to make fun of people with less education. She thought we had to be sensitive of people's feelings. I never got to do the column, but it would have been very funny."

"I've been through the archives, and I've never seen any of these letters. Do you know if someone kept them?" I asked. Popova's face fell, and she bowed her head. "I think they got thrown away," she said. "When I was forced to leave the editorial [board], I took all of the letters related to my research on masculinity with me, but I don't think anyone looked after the others. We did not think about the possibility of change then, that these letters would be important to history." Popova sighed gain. "We lost a lot of good things after these changes."

Women's Activism in Bulgaria

Well before Dinkova and Popova were writing for *Zhenata Dnes*, women's organizing had a long history in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Women's Union was founded in 1901,[4] and Clara Zetkin herself claimed that Bulgaria had one of the strongest socialist women's movements as early as 1922.[5] But it was only with the 1947 Dimitrov Constitution that women earned full legal equality with men. After World War II, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) disbanded or coopted independent prewar women's organizations and embarked on a state-led program for women's full emancipation, informed by the socialist principles spelled out in the Second International and in the context of a dramatic demographic imbalance caused by the loss of so many Bulgarian men in the war.

The BCP faced a wide variety of problems, including a high rate of infant and maternal mortality. To emancipate women and incorporate them into the labor force, childbirth needed to be made much safer, and the state had an active interest in ensuring that Bulgarian babies survived past their first year. For peasant women living in prewar Bulgaria, the situation had been dire. For instance, I met with Dr. Genoveva Mihova, a demographer at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences who worked for the CBWM in the late 1980s. Mihova spoke at length about the improvements that the communists brought in terms of reducing maternal and infant mortality, starting with the story of her own family. Like Tchomakova, Mihova came from a peasant background. Before she was born, her mother had given birth to four children. The first child was born prematurely and died. "If

this child had been born in a hospital, it probably would have survived," Mihova told me. "But we were a poor family in the village, and the child was born at home with a midwife. They had no technology to keep the child alive." Her mother then had three more children. The oldest was six years old and the youngest was nine months old when an epidemic of small pox hit their village. The six-year-old died first, followed three months later by the baby. Only one child remained out of four full pregnancies and deliveries.

After 1944, Mihova's mother realized she was pregnant again. The communists had liberalized abortion, so she went in to terminate her pregnancy. The doctor agreed to the procedure but advised that her one surviving child would be lonely without a sibling. If she gave birth in one of the new maternity clinics, her child was likely to survive. Mihova's mother worried that she could not afford a hospital birth, but the doctor assured her that the new state would pay for it. Genoveva was that fifth child. "Communism did a lot to eradicate those childhood diseases and to improve health conditions for women and children throughout the country. This should not be underestimated," she explained. "I would not be here otherwise."

During the early decades of communism in Bulgaria, amid the purges, show trials, and forced collectivization, political efforts were also concentrated on increasing women's literacy, improving their education and training, and incorporating them into the formal labor force. This was all work carried out by BCP activists such as Tchomakova. As a young woman in her mid-twenties, Tchomakova mobilized women to help rebuild a country devastated by war. Although the Party certainly encouraged these initial goals because of postwar labor shortages and the demands of rapid industrialization through central economic planning, the ideological rhetoric of early socialist thinkers also influenced them. In addition to granting women full legal equality, Bulgaria (like other East European nations) liberalized divorce laws, guaranteed reproductive freedoms, and provided enhanced social protections to single mothers and children born out of wedlock. Women could keep their maiden names after marriage, had the right to own their own property, and to dispose of their own incomes. Although patriarchal traditions remained strong in the home, the communist government ensured equal access to all educational institutions, often encouraging women to pursue opportunities in traditionally male-dominated professions.[6] The expropriation of private property was accompanied by a concomitant assault on male authority in the family.

The spirit of the first postwar decade is captured in a 1954 state-produced documentary film *Аз Съм Трактористка* (*I Am a Woman Tractor Driver,* 1954). The twenty-five-minute film celebrates the lives of young independent women helping to build a modern, industrial economy. The film explores the lives of young women working in an actual women's tractor brigade in the Bulgarian city of Pazardjik. It opens with a peasant girl writing a letter to the head of the tractor brigade to inquire how she too could become a tractor driver. The remainder of the film constitutes the reply of the brigade leader to the peasant girl, and describes how socialism is providing new opportunities for women who are now the equals of men. In the final moments, the protagonist describes to the peasant girl that Bulgarian women can now be anything that they want as a flickering montage shows images of women working in traditionally male jobs. The final shot shows a young woman in the cockpit of an airplane, smiling up at the camera, and then jetting off into the bright communist future.

To a certain extent, the BCP lived up to these early promises to emancipate women, especially for those in rural areas. The postwar efforts of the BCP reduced infant and maternal mortality rates and expanded electricity, water, and sewage networks, vastly improving the lives of ordinary Bulgarians.[7] Over a relatively short period of thirty years (1950–80), the predominantly agrarian Bulgarian society was transformed into an industrial one. In 1956, 70.7 percent of the workforce was concentrated in the agricultural sector; 22.1 percent, in the industrial sector; and only 7.2 percent, in the professional services sector.[8] By 1988, only about 20 percent of the workforce was involved in agricultural work, while 61.2 percent was employed in the industrial sector and 18.8 percent was employed in the services sector.[9]

Even if the BCP could not live up to all of its promises, women's lives changed dramatically.[10] Women formed a large part of the newly industrialized workforce, and soon they accounted for about half of the workers in almost every sector. By the mid-1980s, 44.7 percent of the workers in industry were women, as were 53.6 percent of the workers in the trade sector; 68.9 percent of those in education; 65.3 percent of those in finance, credit, and insurance; and almost 40 percent of those in public administration.[11] Furthermore, women accounted for an increasingly larger portion of a variety of managerial and executive positions.[12] All of these changes precipitated a decline in the birthrate, which threatened Bulgaria's continued economic growth. At the historical moment in which American women began fighting for access to men's colleges and fair employment

opportunities, the Bulgarians were already tackling the problem of work-family balance. Elite communist women, working within the corridors of established power, spearheaded these efforts, despite the constraints of working within a nondemocratic state.

Writing retrospectively in 2003, Dinkova argued that the most progressive leap forward for Bulgarian women came during the third decade of communist rule.[13] In her own recounting of the early days of this "great women's revolution," Dinkova attributes its early success to two women working within the structure of the BCP. Both of them were committed Marxists and had been politically active in the struggle against the Nazi-allied Bulgarian monarchy during World War II. Both were empowered to act on behalf of Bulgarian women, and like later state feminists in Scandinavia, each woman used her position of authority and influence to push through policy changes that would help to improve the material conditions of Bulgarian women's lives.

The first was Sonya Bakish, the longtime editor-in-chief of *Zhenata Dnes*, who died in 2010. Like Popova, Dinkova maintained a very high opinion of Bakish even decades after the end of communist rule. Although Bakish was the wife of one of the most powerful men in Bulgaria, Dinkova recalled that Bakish refused to take advantage of any privileges: "She commuted with the busses, trollies, and trams of the public transportation. She did not use the cars serving her husband, which, although against protocol, was widely practiced by other members of families of high status. She did not even use the editorial office's car, which would have been perfectly acceptable."[14]

Under Bakish's leadership, *Zhenata Dnes* became one of the publications with the largest circulation in Bulgaria.[15] The magazine had started in 1945 with twenty-four pages and a circulation of twenty thousand.[16] By 1976, issues had forty-eight pages and a circulation of 400,000 copies in Bulgarian and 120,000 in Russian.[17] In a letter to Alexander Lilov, a secretary of the Central Committee, the CBWM complained that there were at least 100,000 Bulgarian women who wanted a subscription to the magazine, but the Committee was unable to meet this demand because it had used up its paper quota.[18] By the end of the 1970s, *Zhenata Dnes* printed 500,000 Bulgarian and 100,000 Russian copies for a total population of about 4.5 million women, meaning that almost one in every seven Bulgarian women received the magazine.[19]

Zhenata Dnes not only supported the discussion of women's issues among women domestically; it also became a valuable platform encour-

aging dialogue between the Committee and ordinary working women.[20] Although *Zhenata Dnes* promoted socialism and celebrated the achievements of other centrally planned economies, it also catered to the popular interests of its subscribers. Mixed in among the articles about the superiority of state socialism, the magazine published poetry, short fiction, travel articles, horoscopes, features on arts and crafts, recipes, sewing patterns, fashion pages, and even a personals section where lonely Bulgarian men could place small ads. Indeed, the Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova argued that *Zhenata Dnes* grew popular precisely because it refrained from overly ideologizing the everyday issues about which women wanted to read.[21] The magazine created an "imagined community" of Bulgarian women from different ages, professions, and educational levels.[22]

The revenue from subscriptions to the magazine went directly into the budget of the women's CBWM, and it supported the committee's independence from the central communist authorities.[23] Unlike the Liga Kobiet in Poland, which was dependent on the Communist Party for its finances,[24] the CBWM had its own discretionary funds, which it used to underwrite a wide variety of domestic initiatives, including the funding of key studies that provided empirical evidence for the problems of families in Bulgaria. Despite the continued oversight of the censors in the Central Committee, Bakish's stewardship not only increased the publication's readership, but it also enhanced the CBWM's ability to respond to the needs of ordinary women.

The second important figure in the Bulgarian women's movement was a geneticist who had little experience with women's issues. As Bakish and her journalists tried to transform the discussion of women's issues in the state-controlled media, Elena Lagadinova endeavored to put some of their suggestions into practice. Lagadinova served as the president of the CBWM for twenty-two years and was among the most prominent women in the socialist bloc during the UN Decade for Women. Like Bakish, Lagadinova fought in World War II. The youngest female partisan in a family of national heroes, she began at age eleven as a *yatak* running messages to her father and brothers in the mountains.[25] When she was fourteen, the gendarmes burned down her home, and she joined her brothers as a full-fledged soldier with her own handgun, earning the guerrilla nickname "the Amazon." After the war, Lagadinova went to the Soviet Union, where she earned a doctorate in biology. When she returned to Bulgaria, she was appointed as an agricultural geneticist at an institute affiliated with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Lagadinova spent thirteen years as a

FIGURE 2.1 Elena Lagadinova, 1979.

working scientist, eventually earning her *habilitation* and a national medal in honor of her successful creation of a more robust winter wheat hybrid.[26]

By 1968, Bulgarian women had been fully incorporated into the labor force, but at the cost of future population growth. The Politburo fretted that fewer Bulgarian babies were being born. Anecdotal evidence suggested that women found it difficult to combine productive labor in the formal economy with reproductive labor in the home. The demographer Genoveva Mihova blamed this decline on the rapid increase in women's education as well as the rural-to-urban migration that characterized the first two decades of communism.[27] As with demographic transitions elsewhere, education and urbanization meant a shift from large extended to small nuclear families. Mihova believed that this was an inevitable part of the modernization process and a symbol of women's progress. But fewer babies meant fewer workers.

The Committee of Bulgarian Women (CBW) dealt mostly with international issues between 1950 and 1968.[28] Beginning in the 1960s, the CBW had nurtured bilateral contacts with women's organizations and movements in the developing world. For instance, one stenographic protocol from a meeting of the CBW held on March 17, 1965, demonstrates that Bulgarian women were in close contact with key women leaders in Mali.[29] The protocol shows the Committee discussing the material aid that could be sent to Mali in response to a letter from Aoua Keita, a radical African

FIGURE 2.2
Elena Lagadinova as a partisan, 1944.

woman who was an active militant in the African Democratic Assembly, which was fighting for independence in all of the French African colonies.[30] The CBW had a budget of 5,000 Bulgarian levs to support women's movements in other countries and agreed to spend 1,000 levs for pencils, notebooks, typewriters, printing machines, and other supplies for Mali in support of the women's movement there. The CBW recognized that Keita was one of the most important women in Africa and hoped to invite her to Bulgaria. The same protocol shows another 1,000 levs supporting the Bulgarian Red Cross in its efforts to provide food aid to Angola and a commitment to send 500–700 levs' worth of aid to support women's organizations in India.

But the statute of the CBW changed in response to the demographic crisis. In 1967, Todor Zhivkov handpicked Lagadinova, and she reluctantly

left her scientific career to become the president of the new Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement. The 1968 reorganization of the women's committee increased its authority over all issues related to women and families, including the ability to propose legislation and to sue state enterprises that failed to comply with the laws protecting female employees.[31] Lagadinova was a scientist, not a politician, and under her leadership the demographic problem became a scientific question in need of a solution.

In terms of international work, after the Bulgarian women's committee was reconstituted with enlarged powers in 1968, and under Lagadinova's leadership, the CBWM began sending and receiving a wide variety of delegations from socialist-oriented countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (including a much publicized visit by the recently freed American Angela Davis in 1972).[32] Moreover, Lagadinova openly rationalized her proposal to host the 1972 Council Meeting of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in Bulgaria as a way to forge stronger alliances with women from the newly independent countries after the WIDF pressured the CSW to celebrate an International Women's Year to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the WIDF in 1975.[33]

Domestically, Lagadinova led a mass organization with a structure similar to all other mass organizations in Bulgaria at the time.[34] At the national level, the CBWM had a Political Bureau that consisted of a president (Lagadinova) and several secretaries (including Tchomakova) who were the de facto leaders of the CBWM. These women represented the mass organization to the Bulgarian government and on the international stage. The women in the Political Bureau technically were elected at national conferences, but these elections often confirmed political appointments. At the regional level, the CBWM had a branch in each of Bulgaria's municipalities.[35] The municipal branches had their own local bureaus, with their own presidents and secretaries, elected at municipal conferences by their local constituencies.[36] Only the members of the national Political Bureau and the presidents of the municipal bureaus were paid employees of the state. All other positions were filled by women volunteers who had formal employment obligations elsewhere. Despite the additional burden of this volunteer work, the CBWM had active support from ordinary women across the country.[37]

Part of the reason for its broad constituency was the committee's open-door policy to all Bulgarian women, whether they were official members of the Communist Party or not. Unlike many organizations, the CBWM

FIGURE 2.3 Elena Lagadinova (at right) with Angela Davis (center), 1972.

accepted women who, like Popova, were *bezpartien* (without party affiliation). Also, the CBWM's activities were open to all, and local women had the opportunity to suggest activities that they wanted to have sponsored in their towns and villages. Veselina Grueva, the national secretary in charge of domestic activities from 1975 to 1990, explained to me in 2011: "All of the ideas for the women's programs came from the women's organizations themselves. They could initiate the things they wanted, and we would sponsor them. We worked with a lot of different partners in society to realize these programs. And we made a lot of progress in increasing the cultural level of women in the rural areas. It was very inspired work."[38]

The detailed records of the women who participated in its Third National Congress in 1979 confirm the representative nature of the CBWM.[39] According to the official ledgers, 809 delegates were in attendance, representing all walks of Bulgarian life. While 651 of the delegates were members of the BCP, 44 were members of the Bulgarian Agricultural National Union, 38 were members of the Komsomol, and 76 were "without party." There was also a wide range of ages and professions: 142 delegates were younger than thirty-five, and 107 delegates were older than fifty-five, the

retirement age for Bulgarian women. One hundred and twelve delegates had only a primary school education, and seventy were employed in agricultural labor. From these 809 delegates, the conference was responsible for electing 171 members to be direct representatives to the National Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and to choose its thirteen bureau members. Of these 171 members of the national committee, 121 had university education; forty-five had secondary school educations; and five had only primary school. The range of professions was very diverse, as were the women's ages: twenty-three of the new members chosen in 1979 were younger than thirty, and seventy-two members were younger than forty.[40] Thus, although the CBWM was a state organization led by a member of the Communist Party, it strove for representativeness, recognizing the diversity of the Bulgarian women it claimed to represent. Since the CBWM was a mass women's organization, it did homogenize "women" into a single category of analysis, ignoring such categories of ethnicity and religion—and, certainly, sexuality. It also tended to essentialize women as mothers and caregivers, a trend that was common throughout many maternalist women's movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite these admitted shortcomings, the CBWM tried to include as many different women as possible within its leadership and saw strength in unity against the entrenched patriarchal structure of Bulgarian society.

The Revolution Begins

With Lagadinova at the helm of the CBWM, Bakish fired the opening shots in the "great women's revolution."[41] *Zhenata Dnes* published a series of articles addressing the problems of Bulgarian women in the late 1960s. These included an exposé by the journalists Penka Duhteva and Maria Dinkova on the working conditions of women employed in construction enterprises and an article discussing why Bulgarian women in the town of Kazanlak were not having a third child in their families.[42] Fearing that the bureaucrats in the Central Committee might prevent the publication of an article that was overtly critical of communist policies, Bakish ran the latter piece accompanied by a boldfaced quote from an article Lenin published in *Pravda* in November 1921. It was the first sentence of a longer passage that enjoins the Bolsheviks not to rest on their revolutionary laurels:

> *The best way to celebrate the anniversary of a great revolution is to concentrate attention on its unsolved problems.* It is particularly ap-

> propriate and necessary to celebrate the revolution in this way at a time when we are faced with fundamental problems that the revolution has not yet solved, and when we must master something new (from the point of view of what the revolution has accomplished up to now) for the solution of these problems [emphasis added].[43]

Quoting Lenin allowed the editorial collective at *Zhenata Dnes* to promote the idea that tackling new problems was an appropriate endeavor for communists to pursue—one that was sanctioned by the great father of the Russian Revolution himself. Bakish and her editorial collective could demonstrate their loyalty to the system while simultaneously saying that the system was not doing enough to address women's issues. Using this tactic, *Zhenata Dnes* also published articles on sexology, premarital sex, and single motherhood, as well as Popova's exposé on the changing contours of Bulgarian masculinity, all topics that might be considered too "bourgeois" for a communist women's magazine.

Another example of the activism of the editorial collective at *Zhenata Dnes* and the political bureau of the CBWM was a national survey conducted in 1969. In order to reverse the falling birthrate, Lagadinova wanted to collect data to understand why women were not having more children. Had Bulgarian women recently developed a preference for smaller families? Or was the low birthrate an artifact of social conditions that made it difficult for women to have the number of children they actually wanted? Although sociology was a suspicious discipline in most communist countries, the only way to get this information was to ask women directly. With the permission of the Central Committee of the BCP, Bakish and Lagadinova were able to mount a massive survey effort in coordination with the Central Statistical Office, the Georgi Dimitrov Center for Scientific Investigations and Training, and the Labor Research Institute. The survey, "Women in Production, Social Life and the Family," consisted of multiple-choice questions. It was distributed to all subscribers of *Zhenata Dnes* and received 16,060 anonymous replies from around the country.[44]

The survey produced three key findings. The first was that most Bulgarian women said that they wanted more children than they currently had. Thirty-three percent of the women surveyed only had one child, but fewer than 15 percent said that they wanted to have only one child. About 50 percent of the women surveyed had two children, but 57 percent of the women surveyed said that two children was their ideal. The number of women who wanted three children was almost double that of the women

who actually had three children. Overall, the survey found that while Bulgarian women in 1969 had an average of 1.84 children, they wanted to have an average of 2.28 children.

The survey also asked a series of questions about how women combined work and family responsibilities. It found that only 22.8 percent of the children younger than seven were cared for in state-funded kindergartens or crèches.[45] Bulgarian women also reported that 8 percent of children younger than seven were left at home by themselves while their parents were at work. Women were now incorporated into the labor force, but the survey found that they were desperately cobbling together childcare. Although they tried to use grandparents and husbands as much as possible, the primary responsibility for looking after young children still fell on mothers. When Bulgarian women were asked, "What prevents you from having more children?" 22 percent said they felt they were already too old, and 26 percent claimed they did not have the strength to work and raise children at the same time. A further 20 percent responded that they did not have the "material resources" to have another child, and 11 percent felt that their homes were not big enough. Thus, more than half of the women surveyed claimed that scarcity of time or resources prevented them from having the number of children they wanted.

Time budget data highlight the severity of this situation. The survey found that, while women spent eight hours a day at work, they spent an additional one to two hours commuting to and from the workplace. On top of this, they spent four-and-a-half hours cooking, cleaning the house, standing in line for household necessities, washing and ironing, and working on private agricultural plots. These fourteen-and-a-half-hour days meant that women had little time for the other activities that the communist government claimed were important for its citizens. Lagadinova and Bakish confirmed what individual Bulgarian women already knew: they had no time to spend with their children, let alone in social and political activism, further education and training, reading literature, participating in cultural activities or any other forms of sport or recreation. It was clear that communist emancipation for women in the workplace had done little to relieve women's responsibilities in the home, and this double burden explained the falling birthrate. Exhausted women made individual decisions that resulted in a national crisis.[46] Bulgarian women had been emancipated in theory, but in practice they were suffering under the massive pressure of a society that valorized motherhood but refused to support it with concrete resources.

Once the nature of the problem became clear, the CBWM began to consider different policies to allow women to have the larger families they said they wanted.[47] One solution was to reduce the obligation for women's employment outside of the home. For both ideological and practical reasons, however, Lagadinova and Bakish refused to pursue this course. First, socialist doctrines demanded the full participation of women in society in order to reduce their economic dependence on men and to ensure sexual equality. Second, most communist countries, including Bulgaria, needed women's labor to forge ahead with rapid industrialization. Third, mass literacy campaigns and an almost universal commitment to women's education and training meant that the communist state had already invested heavily in developing the human capital of women. Not to make use of their skills would be a waste of talent, particularly since women now dominated the white-collar professions of law, medicine, education, and banking.[48] Finally, for many Bulgarian women, paid employment outside the home, even if compulsory, was a form of self-actualization. The survey found that women *wanted* to be both mothers and workers. They merely desired help in balancing these two responsibilities.[49]

Another way to increase the birthrate was to severely limit women's access to abortion, the primary form of birth control. By 1969, the number of abortions far outstripped the actual birthrate.[50] Bulgaria's northern neighbor had already placed heavy restrictions on access to abortion in 1966 after decades of liberal abortion policies. Indeed, Romania became the most repressive pronatalist regime in all of the Eastern Bloc.[51] The Bulgarian communist elites did consider a similar policy of restricting abortions, but the CBWM, like the Liga Kobiet in Poland, strongly recommended against this course of action.

Instead, the Committee advocated for a massive expansion of state entitlements for mothers. Rather than forcing women to retreat from the labor force or compelling them to have babies, the CBWM proposed to socialize as much domestic labor as possible, following the ideas of the women's conferences of the Second International and the early policies of the Zhenotdel in the Soviet Union. Their proposal called on the state to dramatically expand the construction of crèches and kindergartens. They also advocated for a new policy of maternity leaves that would allow women up to two years of paid leave from the labor force with a guarantee that their jobs would be held for them in their absence. Furthermore, time spent on maternity leave was to count as labor service toward women's pensions.

The CBWM proposal also included a provision for child allowances, which the state would pay to new mothers on the birth of a baby. These allowances would steadily increase with each subsequent child, up to three children. The CBWM advocated for the expansion of workplace cafeterias where meals could be prepared for women to take home after their factory shifts. Ideally, these policies would reduce the double burden on individual women.[52] At the time when this was proposed in 1970, no other socialist country had such a generous set of maternity provisions in place to support working mothers,[53] and the USSR would not get a comprehensive maternity leave policy until 1981.[54] In the West, only the Scandinavian social democracies were as progressive in terms of supporting women in their quest to combine employment with motherhood. And while these measures certainly reinforced the idea that maternity was a social responsibility of women and valorized women's roles as workers and mothers without a similar valorization of men as workers and fathers, they did what Bulgarian women said they wanted. In this case, women's interests aligned with the interests of the Communist Party. Later, the maternity law was amended so that fathers and grandparents could take the "maternity" leave in the place of the woman, and a key Politburo decision included language about reeducating men to be more active in the home:

> The reduction and alleviation of woman's household work depends greatly on the common participation of the two spouses in the organization of family life. It is therefore imperative
>
> a) to combat outdated views, habits, and attitudes as regards the allocation of work within the family;
> b) to prepare young men for the performance of household duties from childhood and adolescence both by the school and society and by the family.[55]

Despite their efforts to include men, the CBWM preferred to socialize as much domestic labor as possible. But this would be expensive, drawing resources away from the development of heavy industry, which was an economic priority. Luckily, the CBWM had three key allies. The first was Tsola Dragoicheva, who had founded the original Bulgarian Popular Women's Union and had gone on to become one of the most senior members of the Bulgarian Politburo.[56] Bakish's husband was also a Politburo member, and he may have lent support to his wife's cause. Todor Zhivkov's daughter Lyudmila Zhivkova was quickly working her way up through the political

ranks and undoubtedly had influence over her father, a widower.[57] She had worked with the CBWM and *Zhenata Dnes* on the promotion of Bulgarian arts and culture and would attend the first UN Women's Conference in Mexico City with Lagadinova. Zhivkova probably had a hand in promoting women's issues behind the scenes.

At the same historical moment when US President Richard Nixon vetoed the idea of a nationally funded childcare system and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was meeting resistance from individual states that refused to ratify it, the Bulgarian Politburo issued an official decision on March 6, 1973. The decision, "Enhancing the Role of Women in the Building of a Developed Socialist Society," authorized massive budget expenditures to expand state supports for women.[58] Perhaps more important, the Politburo instituted only a limited ban on abortions. Abortion remained safe, legal, and easily available for all single and divorced women, as well as for women caring for two or more children (even if those children were not biologically her own). The only women who could not attain legal abortions were married women with fewer than two children in their care. Lagadinova and the CBWM opposed this measure. "No woman should be forced to have a child that she does not want," Lagadinova told me in 2012. "It is bad for the child, and it is bad for society." In practice, the Bulgarian medical community refused to cooperate with the ban, and most women could easily circumvent it.[59]

Another important component of the 1973 decision was that it strengthened the role of the CBWM in ensuring that Bulgarian enterprises implemented the new laws. Since 1968, the Committee had been empowered to carry out something called *naroden kontrol* (people's control) or *obshtestven kontrol* (societal control).[60] Lagadinova and her colleagues had the right to represent women to other state agencies. For instance, they could make sure that pregnant women were moved to more suitable work posts if their current jobs were too strenuous. Furthermore, if an employer did not give a woman maternity leave, or did not hold her job for her during her absence, a woman could complain to the CBWM, which could take up the matter with the enterprise directors.

After the Politburo decision, the CBWM became more aggressive. It sent representatives out across the country to ensure that enterprises utilized the resources necessary to build on-site crèches for lactating mothers. The Committee also gave regular updates to the Central Committee of the BCP about whether the decision was being fully implemented. In

a letter to the Central Committee in 1977, Lagadinova chastised the government for failing to build the number of crèches and kindergartens to which it had committed.[61] A similar letter was sent to Stanko Todorov, complaining that there were still eighteen thousand children without childcare places and blaming the government for not allocating the necessary resources to fulfill the plan.[62] In a different report to Todorov, Lagadinova explained in exhausting detail the appropriate architectural and interior designs for crèches and kindergartens.[63]

On a more mundane level, the CBWM dispatched inspectors to make sure that women had clean bathrooms and functioning cafeterias in their workplaces and that cafeteria food was of a sufficient quality. In 1975, for instance, Lagadinova wrote a "warning note" to Professor Ivan Illchev, vice-president of the Council of Ministers and president of the Commission on Living Conditions, complaining that the Hristo Mihailov factory in Mihailovgrad did not have a workers' cafeteria. She noted that 830 of the 1,007 workers were women, who were forced to bring their own meals and eat at their work stations. The Committee insisted that a cafeteria be built immediately.[64]

One of the most interesting departments in the CBWM was the "complaint" section. As with *Zhenata Dnes*, women from all over Bulgaria wrote letters asking the Committee for advice on both personal and professional issues. Veselina Grueva worked in the complaint department for fifteen years, traveling around the country encouraging women to contact the CBWM and promising that the Committee would do its best to make sure that women's needs were addressed. Like Pavlina Popova, Grueva and her colleagues in the complaint section claimed that they tried to answer every letter they received, even if the CBWM was unable to grant the writer's request. The Committee had two lawyers who volunteered their time to help deal with legal questions and officially forwarded complaints to other state agencies.[65] In a 2011 interview in Sofia, Grueva recalled:

> This was very democratic. We [sometimes] met with women and listened to their concerns. We wrote protest letters on their behalf. For instance, when they passed the new Family Code in the 1980s, we spent a lot of time helping women to figure out the new laws and how they could be applied to their personal lives. We were very democratic. This is a form of democracy, to talk to the population, to listen to their concerns, and to act on them. It was not all black at the time. Yes, it was a totalitarian government, but we took a lot

of initiatives to work on behalf of women and the work that we did was very valuable.[66]

In the CBWM archives I discovered numerous letters written to the Central Committee on behalf of Bulgarian women. The CBWM demanded the expansion of the domestic production of goods that would benefit women and children. For instance, if you had a flat-footed child, there was no domestic supply of arch supports for footwear. The CBWM successfully lobbied to have a local factory produce them.[67] In one report from the CBWM on the production of toys and sports equipment, the Committee put forth detailed proposals for the production of high-quality, age-appropriate toys for small children in the kindergartens and various sporting goods for children in primary and secondary school.[68] In another letter to the Central Committee, Lagadinova wrote to protest the lack of high-quality clothing being produced in Bulgaria, explaining, "The clothes which can be found now in the stores for our citizens are the ugliest that can be seen."[69] She complained that the Ministry of Trade and Services was not doing its job: "Jersey dresses, which are very practical, are rarely available in the stores. When they are, there are only limited sizes and are not in the most fashionable styles." She went on to state that, while the supply of men's underwear was adequate, "women's and youth underwear" was available only in limited quantities and were not produced "in all the sizes or patterns or colors that the population is seeking."[70] The Committee also did research on Western supermarkets in an attempt to reduce the burdens associated with shopping in a communist country.[71]

Infertility was another complaint of women who wrote letters to the committee. After commissioning a study, the CBWM learned that a significant number of cases were the result of male infertility caused by untreated venereal disease. Once this was realized, the CBWM lobbied the military to make sure that all draftees were screened for diseases when they returned to base after a leave of absence. Both the CBWM and *Zhenata Dnes* further attempted to redistribute some of the household labor to men by promoting the idea that Bulgarian men should be equal partners in the home. *Zhenata Dnes* even ran a series of articles discussing the role of fathers and encouraging men to help their wives around the house, featuring photos of Bulgarian men knitting, boiling laundry, and feeding a baby.[72]

Of course, not all of the CBWM's efforts were successful, particularly their attempts to challenge the traditional Bulgarian patriarchy. In one bold proposal, Lagadinova lobbied the Union of Architects to rethink the

traditional design for apartment blocks. The idea was that the first floor of every block would have an indoor playground and a pub where men could sit together and watch the children, giving their wives some time away from home. In the few rural cities where this was tried, however, men resisted the idea that watching children was their responsibility, especially when grandmothers lived nearby.[73] In another case, the CBWM apparently proposed that marrying couples should write up prenuptial contracts to clearly delineate the distribution of resources in the case of a divorce. The authorities refused this idea because they thought it introduced too much calculation into what should be an institution based on love.[74]

Another major problem that the CBWM faced was women's ongoing frustration with the lack of disposable diapers (which Bulgarians refer to generically as Pampers) and the dearth of feminine hygiene products.[75] Long before the environmental movement, communist planners felt that disposable products such as feminine napkins and Pampers were wasteful.[76] There were no domestic facilities that produced them, and the Bulgarian government refused to use hard currency to have them imported. However, Bulgarian women knew these products existed in the West. Their lack of availability in the socialist countries was often seen as a sign that their governments were growing increasingly out of touch with women's needs. The CBWM tried to argue that these products, although important, were not as important for women as having paid maternity leaves, kindergartens, and child allowances. But their arguments fell on deaf ears. Ongoing consumer shortages were one of the biggest frustrations of life for women living in centrally planned economies, something many of them still recall vividly to this day.[77]

Yet another problem plaguing many mass organizations in Bulgaria was the tendency toward gerontocracy. The first generation of women's activists such as Tchomakova were ideologically committed to the precepts of communism and remembered the abysmal situation of women and peasants before World War II. But women born after 1945 took a lot of the achievements of the first generation for granted, forgetting about the material realities of rural living. By the second postwar generation, many younger women did not see communism as a radical and progressive ideology but merely as a hopelessly bureaucratic and stifling political system, which forbade them jeans, rock music, and travel to the West. These generational divides affected the membership of the women's committee, as fewer young women were willing to volunteer for social labor. The leadership of the CBWM aged and slowly lost touch with the dreams

and aspirations of their more youthful constituents. In the long run, this made the women's committee less dynamic and sustainable.

Moreover, although the CBWM made significant strides forward, it did so under a system that constrained the type of civil and political rights championed by women in the Western democracies. Issues of homosexuality went undiscussed, and women did not have the option to stay home with their children after the age of three; no woman could choose to be an economically dependent housewife. Pointing out the real progress enjoyed by Bulgarian women does not erase the many problems confronting women who lived in a centralized state with an economy of shortage. Independent women's organizations were prohibited, and women who promoted individual self-actualization above the state-proscribed roles of mother and worker had few champions within the CBWM. Moreover, many ordinary women resented the perceived privileges of women such as Lagadinova, Dinkova, and Tchomakova, who lived in Sofia, could ride in the committee's special Mercedes-Benz (used for hosting visiting dignitaries), and could travel abroad, particularly to the West. Despite all of these caveats, Bulgarian women made massive strides in a relatively short period of time through "emancipation from above" relative to other countries at similar levels of development in 1945. And compared with the postwar situation in the United States, Bulgarian women were leagues ahead of their American sisters by the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975.

3. Emancipated Women and Anticommunism in the American Political Imagination

Arvonne Fraser was born on a farm in rural Minnesota in 1925, five years after Krastina Tchomakova was born in Bulgaria. Both women came from poor families who lived off the land, and the contours of their everyday lives were similar, despite the social, cultural, and historical differences between Bulgaria and the United States. Fraser's farmhouse had no electricity or running water, and only the kitchen and dining rooms were heated by burning wood, kerosene, or corncobs. Like Tchomakova, Fraser rose up out of her humble background through political involvement—specifically, in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL)—to become a member of an official delegation to the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City. Although the US State Department forbade the Americans from speaking with their counterparts in the communist countries (even if they met by chance in the ladies' room), Tchomakova and Fraser would have had much to chat about. Recalling her youth, Fraser writes, "Expectations for farm girls in the late 1920s were limited. You were supposed to grow up, go to school, find a job for a while, then get married and settle down. Settling down meant having children and being content with what life handed you."[1]

Fraser embraced education as a way out of this destiny, and she graduated from her high school with good grades and valuable experience editing her school's newspaper. At seventeen, she sped off to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul to enroll in a trade school so she could find a good job. World War II was in full swing, and women's labor was desperately needed to staff the factories now whirring at full employment. Fra-

ser also found herself drawn to the university, where she took courses in philosophy and sociology and dove into the world of Minnesota politics.

After the war, Fraser became a campaign secretary for Hubert Humphrey in a new party that combined the Farmer-Labor Party with the Minnesota Democratic Party. Arvonne Fraser was twenty-two years old when she caught her first glimpses of the anticommunism that would politically define the late 1940s and 1950s in the United States. "Within the DFL there was a conflict between traditional liberals and more radical socialists, who, in the pressure-cooker of the nascent Cold War, were deemed to be dangerous 'Reds,'" she writes. "Under Humphrey's auspices, a local chapter of [the] Americans for Democratic Action . . . had been formed to take on the challenges of ridding the newly-merged DFL party of its Communist influences."[2]

Humphrey had been a wildly successful mayor of Minneapolis, and in June 1948 Fraser was offered a job as a secretary-receptionist in Humphrey's campaign for the US Senate. Fraser was an avid Humphrey supporter and considered herself on the "right wing" of the DFL, often called the "university crowd." Fraser supported rights for minorities but shunned the radical politics of the Old Left:

> The 1948 DFL convention battle was between what came to be known as the party's left and right wings. The right wing—though still definitely left of center politically—supported the Marshall Plan to restore Europe from the shambles of World War II. Left wingers were radical Farmer-Laborites and former or concurrent members of the Communist Party, who opposed the plan and supported Henry Wallace for president instead of the incumbent president, Harry Truman. . . . It was a vicious fight—too vicious, I later believed, but I held my tongue.[3]

Although Fraser had one failed starter marriage to a returning veteran, she met the love of her life working on the Humphrey campaign, Donald Fraser. They married and had six children together, and Arvonne became a political juggernaut in support of her husband's congressional career. Donald Fraser served eight terms in the US Congress, and Arvonne became an active congressional wife, traveling frequently with her husband on diplomatic missions overseas. Arvonne Fraser did not start out as a feminist, but the burgeoning US women's movement, her own experiences as a congressman's wife in Washington, and her desire for work after her

children were grown eventually lured her into forming a Washington, DC, chapter of the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL). Through the political connections of her husband's congressional staff members, Arvonne was sent to help represent the US women's movement in Mexico City.

I first interviewed Arvonne Fraser on the phone in 2005. Back then, I was a newly minted assistant professor interested in the politics of international women's organizing during the Cold War. I met her in person in 2011 at the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, and although she had written and published many books and articles, she struck me as more of an activist and a politician than a scholar. Her answers always seemed thoughtful and curated, and she spoke with authority, with full confidence in her own views. As the child of farmers and a left-liberal, Fraser considered herself a solid Democrat. But she was also an anticommunist and an avid defender of women's right to independent organizing. Her personal history reflects the predominant culture in the United States, and she spent many years as a mother and housewife before she became an advocate for women's rights.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the media and popular culture reinforced the idea that traditional femininity and family life were the bulwarks of the freedoms granted by American democracy.[4] For example, Fraser was twenty-one on March 9, 1946 (one day after International Women's Day), when the *New York Times* reported that American and British women were being "hailed in Moscow." Buried on page 15, among the wedding notices, engagement announcements, and a report about the possible increase in the availability of silk for women's stockings, a short article discussed the content of a new manual for Communist Party cadres, which asserted that fully one-third of the industrial labor force in the United States was made up by women during World War II. This fact apparently refuted "all superstitions and prejudices, formerly current in capitalist countries, that women were not capable of working beside men in industrial plants."[5] The article went on to cite Soviet statistics comparing the status of women in the United States to those in the Soviet Union and ended with a quote from a Moscow newspaper: "It is only the Soviet Government . . . that for the first time in history has guaranteed to women genuine equality with men in all spheres of state, social, economic and cultural activities and led them on the highway to a free, creative, and happy life."[6]

But this Soviet definition of a "free, creative, and happy life" clashed with the newly emerging domestic bliss envisioned in the United States,

and Soviet championing of women's status worked to squelch the few voices for women's emancipation in the West. Although fears of communism had been used to silence women's rights activists before World War II,[7] McCarthyism proved a more oppressive political context. The prevalent discourse asserted that only communists would want to destabilize the naturally monogamous, nuclear, and patriarchal family in order to give women equality with men, a narrative one also found in West Germany, where fears of communist influence confined women's roles to what was locally known as the KKK: *Kinder-Küche-Kirche* (children, kitchen, church).[8]

In her groundbreaking book *Homeward Bound* (2008), Elaine Tyler May documented how the culture of the Cold War impacted the idealization of American gender roles and reified a particular vision of domesticity, convincing most Americans that stable families provided the best defense against Soviet plans for world domination: "According to the cold war ethos of the time, conflict within the United States would harm our image abroad, strengthen the Soviet Union, and weaken the nation, making it vulnerable to communism. . . . the real dangers to America were internal ones: racial strife, emancipated women, class conflict, and familial disruption.[9]

The government feared political instability at home, and the equation of feminism and communism proved a useful tool to white, heterosexual American men interested in preserving their patriarchal privilege. The historian Landon Storrs explored the imagined links between feminism and communism during the first and second Red Scares and argued that "right-wingers viewed communism as a challenge not only to capitalist class relations but also to prevailing gender and race hierarchies. For them, the need to stabilize white male supremacy was one important reason to oppose communism."[10] In an era when the feminine ideal glorified the docile mother and dedicated housewife who never worked outside the home, most of these right-wing men despised the idea of feminism and "used popular antifeminism as a tool in their battle against leftist and liberals."[11]

But it was not only white men who upheld the postwar status quo. White women also contributed to the anticommunist crusade, both at home and abroad, often following directives from Washington politicians. In her book *Cold War Women* (2002), Helen Laville documents how many middle- and upper-class women's organizations collaborated with the US government in its anti-Soviet propaganda war, hoping that their

openly anticommunist stance would deflect accusations that they, too, were "subversive." Although these organizations were independently organized, they had no problem supporting the foreign policy aims of the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[12]

Women's employment had been a necessity of the war years, but their continued desire to work outside the home was considered a pathology after the war was over. For example, the book *Modern Woman* (1947) argued that a woman's desire for formal employment undermined her happiness and destroyed the masculine pride of her husband. Written by a psychiatrist and a social historian, the book reached the nonfiction bestseller lists in the United States and championed biologically determined sex roles, which if challenged by women, led to their neuroses. Women's wish for authority amounted to nothing more than "penis envy," which led to the undesirable emasculation of her husband and the eventual breakdown of marital harmony.[13] But why would women desire employment outside the home? And what would make women reject their "naturally" submissive role as wives and mothers? Real and imagined communists proved a convenient scapegoat. *Modern Woman*'s authors placed the blame for these "intensely humiliating" experiences at the feet of Marx and Engels and Soviet support for the cause of women's rights: "Although the Russians in recent years will have nothing of feminism, the political agents of the Kremlin abroad continue to beat the feminist drums in full awareness of its disruptive influence among the potential enemies of the Soviet Union. Political partisans of the Soviet regime therefore, launched the Women's International Democratic Federation in November 1945, in Paris. This organization will, outside Russia, probably continue to promote the theories of feminism and what it can of neurotic disorder."[14]

Domestically, American politicians and media elites also feared that women would constitute a Soviet fifth column against capitalism and democracy and worried about women's political gullibility in the face of communist propaganda about sexual equality. "The Soviet Attack on Women's Minds," an article published in *McCall's* magazine in 1953, opined: "The Communists have carefully calculated the influence of women on the next generation as well as on this one and have devoted an immense proportion of their world war to capturing the hearts and minds of women all over the world. Moscow regards women second only to youth as the most highly sought after ally in the struggle for communism."[15]

One important casualty of the equation of women's rights with communism was an independent women's organization crushed by the Amer-

ican government at about the same time that Bulgarians were consolidating all of their prewar women's organizations into one official women's committee. The Congress of American Women (CAW) was founded on March 8, 1946, a year after the first meeting of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in France. That the leaders of CAW chose the first International Women's Day after the Paris conference to found their own organization was no accident; they saw themselves as advocates for women's rights and world peace and, later, for anticolonial and antiracist causes, much like the WIDF. Although a decidedly leftist organization, the WIDF was "the largest and probably most influential international women's organization of the post-1945 era," with many communist and noncommunist members from around the globe.[16] From the early correspondence among CAW members it is clear that they were strong advocates for peace, internationalism, and women's rights. Many were affiliated with the Old Left and had volunteered in the Spanish Civil War. Some were members of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA).

The strong international bent of the CAW attracted both black and white women to its ranks, including Susan B. Anthony II, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and the artist Muriel Draper. Gene (Regina) Weltfish — a student of Franz Boas and professor of anthropology at Columbia University — served as the organization's president.[17] The social worker Thyra Edwards served as the organization's executive secretary. Edwards was the granddaughter of runaway slaves, and eventually became a labor, civil rights, and women's rights activist, writing articles and traveling internationally to deliver public lectures. Radicalized by the Spanish Civil War, she joined the CPUSA while she was living in New York in the 1930s and visited the Soviet Union.[18]

The early correspondence of the CAW consists primarily of letters to and from Edwards, who actively worked to recruit women to the organization.[19] The state investigation of the CAW commenced in 1948, and in 1949 the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) issued a report condemning the organization and the WIDF as "communist fronts." The committee's report quotes extensively from the literature and proceedings of the CAW and the WIDF, using their own words to demonstrate how communism had infiltrated organizations purporting to support the equality between men and women: "Proclaimed originally as the 'first women's political-action organization since the suffrage movement,' the Congress of American Women is just another Communist hoax specifically designed to ensnare *idealistically minded but politically gullible*

women [emphasis added]."[20] Although the CAW and the WIDF advocated for women's issues in addition to their larger political work around peace, the HUAC belittled their feminist goals and concentrated on their political ties to the Soviet Union:

> The Congress of American Women is an affiliate of the Women's International Democratic Federation, which was founded and supported at all times by the international Communist movement. The purpose of these organizations is *not to deal primarily with women's problems*, as such, but rather to serve as a specialized arm of Soviet political warfare in the current "peace" campaign to disarm and demobilize the United States and democratic nations generally, in order to render them helpless in the face of the Communist drive for world conquest [emphasis added].[21]

The members of HUAC further opined:

> The chief purpose of the Congress of American Women is to act as part of a world-wide pressure mechanism among women, in support of Soviet foreign and domestic policy. From its inception this group has displayed a marked anti-American bias. Its real aims are discreetly hidden behind a smoke screen of such attractive idealistic bait as equal rights for women "in all aspects of political, economic, legal, cultural, and social life," the extension of educational and health benefits, [and] child care. . . . The Congress of American Women and its international parent body [the WIDF] assume that these purposes have reached their fruition in the Soviet Union and that the United States is chiefly derelict along these lines.[22]

Particularly troubling for the HUAC were the reports that the Soviet Union "was pictured as a veritable paradise for women where all of their problems had long been solved."[23] Indeed, the HUAC reported with incredulity that an "unmarried" delegate from the British Labour Party had the audacity to discuss pay inequality between men and women in the majority of countries and to "state flatly" that: "Only in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria do laws exist guaranteeing women equal pay for equal work."[24] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn also criticized the "bourgeois democracies" for granting women's rights "only piecemeal" and "after tremendous struggle."[25] Flynn argued that women's activists should use the USSR to "demonstrate to American women" that only the communists are the active champions of women's issues.

The HUAC report then goes on to discuss how a congress of the WIDF called for "extensive government sponsored measures" and "a network of institutions" supported by the state. These institutions would protect women and children so that women could take up positions in the formal labor force, an idea, as we have seen above, which was anathema to American conservatives. As Betty Friedan showed so well in *The Feminine Mystique*, popular discourse in the United States embraced Freud's idea of penis envy and classified women who wanted careers as neurotics. According to "experts," the Soviets supported feminism because it "had a single objective: the achievement of maleness by the female, or the nearest possible approach to it. Insofar as it was attained, it spelled only vast individual suffering for men as well as women, and much public disorder."[26]

The attack on CAW caused many tragedies. Following their investigations, HUAC forced the organization to register as "subversive," which precipitated its dissolution in 1950. In 1954, the US government successfully pressured the United Nations to revoke the WIDF's consultative status as an NGO at the United Nations. On a personal level, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was arrested in 1951 and served two years in prison for being a member of the CPUSA. Muriel Draper ceased all political activities after being investigated by HUAC and died in 1952. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) hounded Thyra Edwards, one of the most prominent black women of her generation, and she was under continued surveillance until her death in 1953. Dr. Gene Weltfish had openly criticized American foreign policy in Korea and was blacklisted after refusing to answer questions about her political affiliation. After sixteen years of lecturing as an adjunct professor, Weltfish lost her job at Columbia University in 1953. She did not find another teaching position for the next eight years. Susan B. Anthony II, the grandniece of Susan B. Anthony, was blacklisted in 1954 and barely evaded deportation.

The HUAC hearings were only one prong of a much larger anticommunist propaganda campaign. The US government incited ordinary citizens to participate in communist witch hunts. For example, an Armed Forces Information Film helped Americans recognize communists among their neighbors and colleagues.[27] Released in 1950, the film describes various clues to suggest that a person "[might] be a communist." What is remarkable about the film is the gender parity among those who are portrayed as possibly being communists. The first two are men, one who openly declares himself a communist and one who reads communist newspapers. Both are white and appear to be middle class. The third suspected com-

munist is a young blonde woman passing out leaflets in front of a sign that reads, "Down with the Imperialists." The male voice-over tells us that: "If a person supports organizations which reflect communist teachings, or organizations labeled 'communist' by the Department of Justice, she may be a communist."

But the most obvious linkage between feminism and communism comes in the description and portrayal of the second woman. The filmmakers show an unattractive, middle-aged woman in a long black dress, a black hat with a wilted flower perched atop her head. She speaks passionately to a crowd of curious bystanders. Although the film's audience cannot hear her words, the woman shouts and pumps her fists in the air with almost comic exaggeration, embodying the image of the aggressive woman, a woman who has abdicated her femininity to enter the male world of politics. The visual message of this segment is clear: uppity women with political opinions should be treated with suspicion. The male voice-over tells the viewer that: "If the person defends the activities of communist nations, while consistently attacking the foreign and domestic policy of the United States, she may be a communist." Given the hearings against the CAW happening at the time, one might assume that this portion of the film was directed specifically at those women who criticized US foreign policy and domestic policies on women's rights and openly championed the gains made by women in the Eastern Bloc.

Although the witch hunts eventually came to an end, they left deep scars on the American polity, which supposedly idealized freedom of conscience and speech. By 1957, Arvonne Fraser was living the American family ideal with her husband and six children. Although Fraser supported her husband's political career, often acting as a de facto campaign manager, she was unpaid and economically dependent. Her status was that of a "congressional wife," and it would still be a few years before she glimpsed behind the veil of the "feminine mystique." By contrast, in 1957, Elena Lagadinova was earning her doctorate in biology in Moscow, and Krastina Tchomakova was busy expanding primary school education to girls in the rural areas around Bulgaria. Bulgarian women were rapidly being educated and incorporated into the labor force as men's equals. It was also in 1957 that the Soviet Union launched the first satellite into space, and America's leaders fretted that their country was losing the Cold War. The national panic that ensued proved to be a boon for American women,[28] as the US government began to wonder whether the Soviets had gained advantages by educating girls in math and science. As Ruth Rosen has ar-

gued, "To contain Communism, the nation suddenly needed women in the laboratory more than at home."[29]

President John F. Kennedy took these Cold War considerations seriously and believed that, to beat the Russians, the Americans needed to utilize the talent of all of its citizens. He lamented that women who attended elite colleges such as Bryn Mawr, Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley graduated to become homemakers.[30] On December 14, 1961, Kennedy signed Executive Order 10980 to establish the President's Commission on the Status of Women, an early example of a US policy of "emancipation from above." The preamble to the order clearly cites national security as one of the justifications for the Commission:

> WHEREAS it is in the national interest to promote the economy, security, and national defense through the most efficient and effective utilization of the skills of all persons, and
>
> WHEREAS in every period of national emergency women have served with distinction in widely varied capacities but thereafter have been subject to treatment as a marginal group whose skills have been inadequately utilized.[31]

Kennedy appointed Eleanor Roosevelt to lead the commission, which was charged with examining six key areas related to the legal and policy issues affecting the lives of women workers. In his official statement announcing the establishment of the Commission, Kennedy once again emphasized that, "If our Nation is to be successful in the critical period ahead, we must rely upon the skills and devotion of all our people."[32]

In the deliberations about the status of women in the United States, references were often made to women in "other countries," an oblique reference to the Soviet Union and its allies in the Eastern Bloc. On April 18, 1962, Roosevelt interviewed Kennedy on her *Prospects of Mankind* television show for WGBH-Boston. They discussed the important work of the Commission, and Roosevelt delicately asked the president why women in "some other countries" could be found in higher positions of power than in the United States.[33] Kennedy replied that women leave the labor force to have and raise their children and that the American woman's primary responsibility was in the home. Kennedy was still conservative about what a woman's "primary" function should be, but he understood well that the comparison with "other countries" implied a comparison between American-style democracy and Soviet-style communism. A year later, when the

Commission submitted its final report, a historic document titled "American Women,"[34] Kennedy delivered remarks at its official presentation: "I think we ought to look, as a society, at what our women are doing and the opportunities before them. Other societies, *which we don't admire as much as our own*, it seems to me, have given this problem their particular attention [emphasis added]."[35]

By the time "American Women" was released in 1963, ample evidence existed that women enjoyed more legal equality behind the Iron Curtain. In the same year that Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* describing "the problem that has no name" (i.e., the deep unhappiness and dissatisfaction that women felt in their roles as homemakers), the Soviet Union launched the first woman into orbit.[36] On June 12, 1963, the bold headline on the front page of the *New York Herald Tribune* read, "Soviet Blonde Orbiting as First Woman in Space." The *Springfield Union* ran a banner headline: "Soviet Orbits First Cosmonette." Papers across the country showed the image of the attractive twenty-six-year-old Valentina Tereshkova smiling out from under her cosmonaut's helmet. While the US conservatives continued their fearmongering about the disruption that women's rights would cause to the American way of life, the Soviets had put a woman in space.

The link between women's rights and communism also preoccupied the FBI. Rosen argues that FBI surveillance of the women's movement began under J. Edgar Hoover in 1956 as part of the COINTELPRO mission, but widespread infiltration began only in 1969.[37] After Betty Friedan founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, FBI agents went to great lengths to establish a connection between NOW and organizations designated "subversive" by the US Attorney-General. In the declassified FBI file on NOW, it is clear that covert agents kept the organization under surveillance for at least six years, between 1969 and 1975, trying to establish whether it posed an "internal security threat."[38]

Ordinary American women also worried that they might be joining a communist or anti-American organization by participating in NOW's events and demonstrations. On July 6, 1971, a concerned citizen wrote to the FBI:

> Gentlemen,
>
> Recently I attended a meeting of the newly formed Boca Raton branch of an organization called "The National Organization for Women" (N.O.W.) (organized in Washington, D.C. October 29, 1966).

FIGURE 3.1
Cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova.

> At this meeting which I attended, one of the women asked if the organization is subversive. She was told by the organizer of the meeting that it is not subversive. Before I join the N.O.W. organization and pay the dues which they require for membership, I thought it would be wise to write you and inquire if this organization is on any list you may have as being subversive. It appears to be a Women's Lib organization which has good ideas, but I would just like to be sure that it is what it appears to be.

Hoover replied (disingenuously) that the FBI did not make these kinds of determinations and refused to give her an answer either way. But as NOW increased its activities in the context of greater domestic social unrest in the United States, Hoover sent more covert agents to infiltrate the organization and report on its activities.

Richard Nixon was sworn in as the thirty-seventh president of the United States in January 1969, and he took office with a long history as a red-baiting Cold Warrior. In 1950, he won his senate seat in California by

assassinating the character of his female opponent, Helen Gahagan Douglas.[39] He accused her of having communist sympathies and questioned the loyalty of her Jewish husband. Nixon's campaign engaged in a wide variety of stunts to smear and humiliate Douglas, calling her "the Pink Lady" who was "pink right down to her underwear."[40] Nixon was also a veteran of the 1959 "Kitchen Debates" with Nikita Khrushchev, an event that, according to Elaine Tyler May, did much to solidify the idea that anticommunism meant traditional families.[41]

But Nixon could not ignore the growing power of the domestic women's movement. Although this movement was not homogenous, the Nixon administration seemed to lump liberal, radical, and socialist feminists together as one unified social threat. "Tricky Dick" tried to appease the American women's activists by forming another presidential commission to look into women's issues in October 1969. According to his biographer, however, Nixon did not care much for women's issues: "The task force on women's rights was his bastard child, unplanned and unwanted."[42] The largely Republican women on the task force used Cold War rhetoric to justify the value of supporting women who represented what they called "emergent responsible feminism," as opposed to the more radical brands of women's activism calling for structural social change in the capitalist system. These "responsible feminists" championed the need for formal equality while downplaying the most extensive calls for social justice, a distinction which would remain important in the development of the women's movement: "responsible feminists" often meant liberal feminists. When the Presidential Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities submitted its final report to Richard Nixon on December 15, 1969, the authors pointed out that the United States was indeed delinquent in guaranteeing American women their "full constitutional and legal rights." The cover letter stated: "The quality of life to which we aspire and the questioning at home and abroad of our commitment to the democratic ideal make it imperative that our nation utilize the fullest potential of all citizens. . . . Yet the research and deliberations of this task force reveal that the United States, as it approaches its 200th anniversary, lags behind other enlightened, and indeed some newly emerging, countries in the role ascribed to women."[43]

The mention here of newly emerging countries is particularly salient. Although Nixon dragged his feet on the report, trying to bury it, the geopolitics of the Cold War pushed women's issues to the fore, particularly in the Third World.

After the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, a new generation of African, Asian, and Latin American leaders embraced various forms of socialism as a practical alternative to continued colonization.[44] Throughout the 1960s, local Pan-African socialist leaders led national independence movements across the continent, often with the direct or indirect support of the Soviet Union.[45] By the early 1970s, the US government feared the continued spread of Marxist ideology throughout the Third World and questioned its own ability to reverse the trend. North Korea remained communist after the Korean War. The Cuban Revolution and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion resulted in a communist country just off the coast of Florida. In the early 1960s, the Indonesian Communist Party swelled and became the largest communist party in the developing world. The United States went to war in Vietnam to stem the red tide, but that war quickly turned into a quagmire as Vietnamese communists resisted foreign intervention.

An important trend that US leaders could not fail to notice was women's support for these emerging communist movements and their active participation in struggles for national independence. For instance, on January 1, 1959, the tie between women's emancipation and communism became even stronger when Fidel Castro marched into Havana leading a revolutionary force that included armed female soldiers. On February 16, 1962, a classified telegram from the US Embassy in Thailand warned that the communist National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam had begun to infiltrate the south through the formation of "various affilists [*sic*] bodies," including the Liberation Farmer's Front and the Liberation Women's Front.[46] A later CIA report spoke of the "usual array of mass organizations (women's, youth, peasant and labor groups)" that the Vietnamese communists mobilized for their own ends.[47] The dedication and mobilization of Vietnamese women as soldiers for the communist cause mirrored the success of the all-female Mariana brigades in Cuba.[48]

Perhaps the most egregious instance of the United States linking women with communism occurred in Indonesia. On September 30, 1965, six Indonesian generals were assassinated. The killings were blamed on the Indonesian Communists, and the army subsequently massacred between five hundred thousand and one million suspected communists, including women associated with Indonesian women's organizations. Subsequently declassified documents from the US State Department and the

CIA revealed that the United States and some other Western governments (notably, Australia) were complicit in these political massacres.[49] The US ambassador to Indonesia, Marshall Green, sent a series of telegrams to the State Department hoping that the Indonesian Army would take the opportunity "at long last to act effectively against the communists."[50] The CIA provided the Indonesian Army with lists of suspected reds that included the names of women.[51] Ambassador Green gave assurances that the Indonesian Army would have the support of the US government in any action aimed at eliminating communist influence in the country. Green suggested that US covert propaganda should spread the story of the communists' guilt for the assassination of the six generals to rouse the people against the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Communist Party of Indonesia; PKI), although he warned that the story should not be attributable to any source.[52]

The tale that circulated played on the deep fears that communists turned women into weapons in their quest for world domination and that communist calls for women's emancipation ultimately lead to a perversion of those women (much like the so-called penis envy of women who worked outside the home). The standard narrative printed in the newspapers was that a group of women from the largest Indonesian women's organization, Gerwani, which had close ties to the PKI, tortured the generals before cutting off their genitals and murdering them, dumping their bodies into a hole. These women then apparently abandoned themselves in an orgy with high-ranking PKI members who happened to be on the scene. The disinformation campaign highlighted the moral depravity of communist women — their brutality and loose sexuality — in contrast to the idealized vision of appropriate Indonesian femininity. This sensational story inspired a massacre and the arrest and torture of many innocent women. Indeed, although subsequent investigations proved the story completely false (the generals' bodies were exhumed and their genitals found intact), the stereotype of the violent communist woman persists in Indonesia to this day.[53]

But the US government soon learned that military intervention was not enough to prevent the developing world from "turning red." After the United Nations declared the 1960s the first Development Decade, a new strategy for US foreign assistance aimed to counteract the growing influence of socialism by promoting a market-based alternative to economic development.[54] The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 reorganized American foreign aid efforts to separate out military from nonmilitary spend-

ing. The government created the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to promote American foreign policy goals and to support American corporations through humanitarian aid. The agency provided the foundation of a broader effort to win influence (and markets) in the now independent countries of the Global South.

The problem was that state socialist central planning seemed to be working. The rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union (and other poor Eastern Bloc countries such as Bulgaria), which nationalized their means of production, served as a powerful example to new states hoping to achieve modernization. The US needed a democratic, free-market solution that distinguished itself from the exploitative colonial policies of the past, and some of America's most powerful men busied themselves with creating one.[55] In 1960, Walter W. Rostow published what became a foundational text of Western development economics: *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Rostow was a staunch anticommunist and would serve as a deputy national security adviser in the Kennedy administration and as the national security adviser in the Johnson administration.

Rostow's book outlined a progressive, linear path to economic development that relied on and celebrated individualism, entrepreneurship, and private property, in contrast to the communal, centrally planned, state-owned economies promoted by the Eastern Bloc. His five stages started with the "traditional" subsistence agricultural society and ended with the "Age of Mass Consumption," in which people would have disposable incomes to buy products beyond their basic needs. Of course, the entrepreneurial and individualistic values considered necessary by Rostow to move through the stages valorized male gender roles and assumed that women had little productive value outside of the home. Projects based on Rostow's model targeted men living in urban areas and exacerbated existing rural-urban divides and class and gender inequalities. But this would become apparent only after a decade of failed experimentation.

The specter of communist ideologies taking over the developing world became especially powerful during the Vietnam War and the United States' failure to "save" the South Vietnamese from socialism. No one understood the consequences of communism in the developing world better than one of Rostow's colleagues in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Robert S. McNamara. Fresh from his tenure as secretary of defense after having fallen out with President Lyndon Johnson over American involvement in Vietnam, McNamara assumed the presidency of the World Bank in 1968.[56] He had spoken and published widely on the idea that poverty bred

communism. The only way to fight communism was to raise the living standards of the poor and to blunt the sharp inequalities created and perpetuated by capitalism:

> Given the certain connection between economic stagnation and the incidence of violence, the years that lie ahead for the nations of the southern half of the globe look ominous. This would be true if no threat of Communist subversion existed, as it clearly does. Both Moscow and Peking, however harsh their internal differences, regard the modernization process as an ideal environment for the growth of Communism. . . . It is clearly understood that certain Communist nations are capable of subverting, manipulating and finally directing for their own ends *the wholly legitimate grievances* of a developing society [emphasis added].[57]

McNamara's thirteen-year presidency of the World Bank ushered in an era of lending for projects based on a new paradigm—called "redistribution with growth" by the World Bank and "basic needs" by the United Nations. World Bank lending increased from $883 million per year in 1968 to $12 billion per year in 1981, when McNamara left the bank.[58] Whereas early World Bank efforts focused on building large infrastructure projects such as roads, power plants, and dams, redistribution with growth programs increased lending for softer social projects such as education, health care, clean water, and sanitation. Investing in the future human capital of a country also meant investing in women, particularly because raising the education level of women decreased the birthrate. Poverty alleviation became a legitimate goal of international development practice. The new focus on basic needs transformed Western development theories, and at least until the debt crisis of the 1980s (and the subsequent neoliberal dismantling of the welfare state) women in the Global South benefited from the largesse of a wide variety of bilateral and multilateral aid agencies.[59]

Many of these programs followed the publication of Esther Boserup's landmark *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970. The book highlighted the failure of traditional market-based development models in the Third World, which created industrial growth at the expense of social harmony and increased poverty.[60] Women had been disproportionately harmed by Rostowian development programs, and Boserup argued that women needed development as much as (if not more than) men. A general atmosphere of social unrest and protest against the Vietnam War, both in

the United States and abroad, also impacted ideas about the traditional development paradigm.[61] Radical critiques, such as dependency theory coming out of Latin America, forced US foreign-policy makers to reconsider the role of previously disenfranchised populations — racial minorities, youth, and women — in preventing their countries from falling under the sway of communist thinking.

Boserup's book showed that foreign aid from Western countries to the developing world was often concentrated on modernizing the labors of urban men, thereby exacerbating the inequalities between men and women and urban and rural populations. Boserup's work inspired the Women in Development (WID) paradigm whereby foreign development aid could be extended to women. Eventually, the idea that women needed development was turned on its head, and activists claimed that development needed women, giving rise to the Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) strategies that eventually superseded WID.[62] Without the participation of women, who often dominated agricultural production and trade, the economies in developing countries would not grow—no matter how many loans they took to build roads, dams, and power plants. US efforts to support women's economic development in the Global South would eventually inform domestic politics on the question of women's liberation at home.

Responsible Feminists Rising

Back in Washington, President Nixon faced both domestic unrest and growing international anti-Americanism. Women's rights activists, student groups, civil rights crusaders, and antiwar protestors destabilized the country. Outspoken public figures such as Angela Davis, widely known as a radical feminist and a member of the CPUSA — antagonized the government and reinforced the imagined link between state socialism and feminism. After stalling the report of the presidential task force on women's rights for months, Nixon published a cautious statement on April 30, 1970. He emphasized that women's rights advocates should pursue a gradualist approach and avoid actions that might further polarize the public: "The inequalities which many women experience today cannot be overcome merely by writing laws, appointing committees, or passing resolutions. Many of these inequalities are the product of subtle attitudes which are not understood by those who hold them—and which are very slow to change. . . . This issue must not become a divisive matter which brings

Americans into conflict with one another. The best and quickest way to realize the goal of full rights and responsibilities for women is to avoid the path of confrontation."[63]

But if Nixon wanted to avoid confrontation with American women, he did himself few favors when he vetoed the Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1971.[64] One of these was the Comprehensive Child Development Act, passed by a bipartisan vote of Democrats and Republicans. The act would have funded a national network of childcare centers providing high-quality education and medical and nutritional services, a crucial first step for universal childcare. Nixon vetoed the act using the language of a veteran anticommunist and antifeminist. Although he lauded the good intentions of the act, he strongly criticized the "family-weakening implications of the system" it envisioned.[65] In his official veto, Nixon wrote: "For the Federal Government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach."[66] Although there were attempts to revise the act to avoid the presidential veto, a right-wing coalition of conservative housewives rose up to support Nixon and ensure that the United States never attained a universal childcare system like the ones advocated for and obtained in state socialist countries.[67]

During Nixon's presidency, the FBI also stepped up its surveillance of NOW, despite the absence of any evidence that it was advocating for the violent overthrow of the US government. Although there were many feminist groups and subgroups in the United States, NOW was one of the most prominent formal organizations advocating for women's equal rights. After J. Edgar Hoover died in May 1972, the FBI's investigations came under internal scrutiny. In February 1973, L. Patrick Gray, the acting director of the FBI, chastised bureau agents for labeling NOW an "internal security threat." Gray wrote: "It is undesirable that the activities of groups which have no known subversive or violent background be identified in Bureau communications as being of interest in the Internal Security field. There is no information to indicate that NOW is a violence-prone organization or is dominated by revolutionary groups."[68] Despite Gray's admonishment, the FBI persisted in its investigations of NOW, and information sent to the Office of the Attorney-General until 1975 continued to be directed to the "Internal Security Section."[69]

During the early 1970s, the domestic influence of the liberal strain of feminism increased, even infiltrating the ranks of the Republican Party.

On April 12, 1971, the diplomat, lawyer, and Nixon loyalist Rita Hauser wrote a memo to the president criticizing his handling of domestic women's issues in view of the upcoming 1972 elections: "Looking back over the past two years, I believe this Administration missed virtually every opportunity to address itself to and command a most powerful and rapidly growing social/political phenomenon: *Emergent Responsible Feminism*. For reasons that I will state below, it is clear to me that this major development will be felt directly in the 1972 Election. Unless steps are taken now to associate this Administration in proper ways with this movement, a source of electoral support may be missed and, even more important, turned against you [emphasis added]."[70] Nixon's advisers agreed with Hauser, and the president was encouraged to take women's issues more seriously.[71] In 1972, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution, with Nixon's open support. Despite its overwhelming approval, declassified letters between Nixon and his political advisers demonstrate that he supported the ERA only to win women's votes because he was assured that the amendment would never be ratified by three-quarters of the states.[72] It was a calculated piece of political theater. In the end, Phyllis Schlafly mobilized conservative women and housewives to resist the ERA, clamoring to protect traditional gender roles.[73]

But "emergent responsible feminism" had its allies in Washington. By 1973, Arvonne Fraser was actively involved in WEAL, and had developed a wide network in the nation's capital. At that time, her husband was a member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, and Fraser was well connected with the other congressmen serving with him. Irene Tinker, who was then researching women's issues, and Mildred Marcy of the League of Women Voters lobbied Fraser to ask her husband to hold official hearings on the status of women in the developing world. Tinker and Marcy, mindful of Boserup's critique of Rostowian development economics, wanted to expand the burgeoning activism of the US women's movement to the women of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Recalling the idea for the hearings, Fraser writes: "Ordinarily I didn't involve myself in anything Don did in the Foreign Affairs Committee except help him pick good staff. This time I did."[74]

Donald Fraser held the hearings, and a draft amendment was prepared. The United Nations had already declared 1975 the International Women's Year, and this spurred American women to action. Fraser recalls: "Irene and Mildred, in collaboration with Virginia Allen, a Republican appoin-

tee as a deputy secretary of state and then the highest ranking woman in the State Department, and others were looking toward the 1975 United Nations International Women's Year and its world conference on women. They decided an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act was needed if [Third World] women were to get any benefit from US foreign aid dollars."[75] The amendment was met with laughter and mocking derision in the House subcommittee, and Fraser learned that the legislation was at risk. Although she was busy with domestic women's issues, Fraser threw herself into the fight, because she was "fed up with laughter about women and feminism." She used her personal contacts to promote the amendment: "Furious, I sat down and typed individual letters on my most elegant personal stationary to every member of the committee, except, of course, Don. I could make sure he voted right on this. My letter to the other members, most of whom I knew, said I had learned about the amendment from a colleague in New York and the laughter it provoked. I assured each that I knew he wasn't the one laughing (when he probably was) and asked him to support the amendment."[76]

The Percy Amendment (named after the senator who introduced it) passed. A Women in Development office was established at USAID. The amendment meant that a small but dedicated staff would be directing foreign assistance to women in the developing world. Although Fraser did not know it at the time, the Percy Amendment would pay her children's college tuition and fund her retirement.[77] After her work for Jimmy Carter's campaign and his election as president, Carter would appoint Fraser as head of USAID's WID office, and she and her staff would be instrumental in providing funding to help delegates from the Global South attend the women's conferences in Copenhagen and Nairobi. Although Fraser would go on to become one of the heroines of the "worldwide women's movement," winning the hearts and minds of women in the developing world was no easy task, especially in the poor countries of southern Africa where the United States supported racist regimes in their struggles against the spread of world communism. One of these countries was the former British colony of Northern Rhodesia.

4. A Brief History of Women's Activism in Domestic Political Context

CASE 2: ZAMBIA

In January 2013, I flew for twenty-seven hours to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, to meet one of Zambia's most prominent women. Chibesa "Bessie" Kankasa was a national heroine—a fighter for Zambian independence, the president of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) Women's League and a member of the Central Committee, and, later, a High Commissioner to Kenya. She was also the mother of ten children. Kankasa met me on her porch wearing a tailored African dress and headdress made from matching *chitenge* fabric in royal blue, lavender, sky blue, and white. She welcomed me, and when I noticed some uniformed children playing in her yard, she explained to me that she ran a preschool behind her house, named in honor of her late husband, T. J. Kanda. She led me inside to her sitting room. Elegant European furniture filled the sprawling space. Medals, certificates, and portraits of herself from her many years as a politician and diplomat covered her walls. I noticed a large photograph of Pope John Paul II and a wide, metal relief of the Last Supper. Kankasa owned an entire compound in Kabulonga, an exclusive residential neighborhood in Lusaka.

We sat down on a luxurious divan, and I thanked her for agreeing to meet with me. A young woman and man appeared from the hallway. The man walked into the room with his head bowed, squatted down in front of Kankasa, and spoke in a low voice.

"Would you like coffee or tea?" Kankasa asked me.

"Coffee would be great."

Kankasa said something in Bembe to the young man, who then backed away from her, still squatting, before he stood and disappeared into the hall.

FIGURE 4.1 Chibesa Kankasa at home, Lusaka, 2013.

FIGURE 4.2 Chibesa Kankasa, 1985.

"These are my servants," Kankasa told me.

I nodded.

I reached into my bag and realized that, in the rush to leave my guest lodge, I had left my phone charging by the bed. I did not have a recording device. In the interview that followed, I took detailed notes by hand and then typed the notes up as soon as I returned to the lodge. Kankasa and I spoke in English, but she spoke slowly and with great deliberation, so I had plenty of time to write things down. I knew she had recently been ill, and she sometimes seemed to be grasping for memories, so I let her lead the conversation. I planned to meet her several times over the course of my stay in Lusaka, so I did not have to cover everything in our first encounter.

"I was born at Lubwa Mission in the Chinsali District," she began. "My father was working as a missionary. My father was transferred to the Copperbelt when I was a girl. That is why I had the advantage of being in the urban areas."

As she spoke, the servants reappeared and placed a full tea service on a low table beside us. My coffee came on a tray accompanied by a small pitcher of cream and a bowl of sugar.

"This country was ruled by capitalists. It was ruled by colonialists before when it was the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The colonialists ruled with an iron bar. The system was that of the horse and the rider. Let the natives be the horses and the white settlers be the riders. Women of this country were looked down on as second-class citizens. We were not allowed to enter any European markets; we called them European butcheries. The reason was because [Europeans thought that] African women had a bad smell."

The history of white settler colonialism in the territory now known as Zambia has its roots in 1888, when Cecil Rhodes obtained mineral rights from some local chiefs on behalf of the British South Africa Company (BSAC). Areas controlled by the BSAC were combined into a territory called Northern Rhodesia in 1911, and the British crown asserted full colonial control over the territory in 1923. In that same year, Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) became a self-governing British colony while Northern Rhodesia fell under the control of the British Colonial Office. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, which Kankasa referred to, was created when the British combined Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland (present-day Malawi) into a single administrative colonial unit in 1953, a decision made in opposition to a significant

number of the Africans living in these regions, particularly in the copper-rich Northern Rhodesia.

White racism against the local African population was focused on controlling the movements of African women. In particular, African women from the rural areas were not allowed to travel to the cities unless they could show official marriage certificates,[1] and there were strict prohibitions on African women entering the markets where European women shopped, the so-called European butcheries.

Kankasa continued:

> One day, I was going to town with my husband when I was pregnant with my second child. It was 1955. In my opinion, I had a very good bag and a nice maternity dress. I thought I could go into a European butchery. A white woman inside came to me and said, "Get out! Get out! Don't you know that African women smell?" My husband was inside, and there was an argument with the butcher. They called the police. My husband and I were both arrested, and we spent the night in a cell. I was seven months pregnant. I did not understand. I was angry. An African child could not go to school with European children. So now, at that time, my husband was already elected as the vice-chairman of the ANC [African National Congress] in the Copperbelt. And he was already involved in the labor movement. When we went back home, I told my husband that I am going to join politics. That white woman is a woman like me. How can she insult me? We are both women.

Kankasa stopped to prepare a cup of tea, carefully pouring the liquid from the pot into the porcelain cup before spooning in her sugar and milk. "My husband said: 'The struggle cannot be successful without the participation of women.' So it was in that year that I started my career in politics. I joined the other women who were also fighting for national independence. They were older than me, but I was elected the secretary of the Chibaluma township branch of the ANC in the Copperbelt."

As she took a sip of tea, I put down my pen and reached for my coffee cup. "What were your responsibilities as secretary?" I asked.

"My job as a woman politician was to mobilize more women to join politics," she said. "We were having huge meetings at different locations; sometimes we even went into nearby villages to organize meetings, because Chibaluma township was near the rural areas. We sold ANC identity cards, and that money was used for travels and for the politicians. In

1959, we were transferred to the Ndola African Township. At that time the ANC changed its name to [the Zambian African National Congress], but it was short-lived. We named the new party UNIP: United National Independence Party."

After Ghana achieved independence in 1957, a new generation of African leaders pursued the path of national independence, many of them inspired by the ideals of Marxism-Leninism and supported by either China or the Soviet Union in their opposition against their colonial masters.[2] In Northern Rhodesia, the independence struggle against the British was largely nonviolent, but there were deep divisions among African leaders: some favored independence for Northern Rhodesia while others preferred to stay within the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Kankasa and her husband were closely aligned with Kenneth Kaunda, the charismatic leader of UNIP who desired secession from the federation and full Zambian independence.[3] Many Zambian women joined UNIP and became actively involved in independence struggles, forming the UNIP Women's Brigade (UNIP-WB), the precursor to the UNIP Women's League (UNIP-WL).

"In 1959, I started as a secretary in the Twapia township in Ndola. I rose through the ranks up to the women's regional secretary of Ndola," Kankasa explained:

> I was now the head of the entire district with a lot of branches in it. I came from the grassroots level, and I was just climbing slowly from then until 1964. When we got our independence, I was still a leader for women in the Copperbelt. My primary goal during that time was teaching women to read and write, a mass literacy program. We were given a very complicated constitution [during the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland]. This made me open mass literacy classes to teach women how to vote. The constitution which they gave us was very complicated. We called it the "15–15–15 constitution." There were three rows. Fifteen seats were for the national row, to be elected by the ordinary people. Fifteen seats were in the middle row, and those were reserved for Asians and other highly educated people. The third row was called the "upper row," and that was reserved specifically for white people. There were three separate elections. So for ordinary people to understand that there are three different systems, you have to teach them to read.

Kankasa smiled. "We also collected marriage certificates in order to burn them as a protest against white women, to show that we were free."

The British tried to institute some partial measures to enfranchise African voters, but their segregated parliamentary model based on the 15–15–15 constitution provoked more political dissent and resistance, and, ultimately, independence. After various internecine conflicts between the ANC and UNIP, Kaunda was elected prime minister of Northern Rhodesia. On October 24, 1964, Northern Rhodesia became the Republic of Zambia, with Kaunda as president. He rewarded his close allies and supporters by granting them positions within the new UNIP government.

Kaunda nationalized the mines and secured revenue for the young state, but he faced a host of challenges, particularly the low level of education and lack of expertise among the Zambian population. Outside the mining towns in the Copperbelt, Zambia was a rural country, with most citizens engaged in subsistence agriculture and ruled by customary laws. Zambian girls had no educational opportunities other than a handful of missionary schools, and the overwhelming majority of women were illiterate. In the independent nation with hard-won universal suffrage, mobilizing women to support UNIP and its goals for modernization became a top priority.

Kaunda was also committed to the idea of Zambian Humanism, an egalitarian ideology that proposed that African societies needed to be organized to prevent economic exploitation and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, tribal affiliation, class, or sex. Humanism posited that capitalism and colonialism had introduced these divisions and that Africans were traditionally more communitarian than their individualistic British masters. Emerging within the wider context of Pan-Africanism and the African socialism of leaders such as Julius Nyerere in nearby Tanzania, Kaunda's philosophy of Humanism theoretically saw women as equal allies in the building of the independent nation-state. "In 1964, when we got independence, my husband became the first ambassador in Kinshasa [Congo], but I didn't go," Kankasa said. "One reason was that I was still working for the party. And I didn't want to disturb my children's education. They were still fighting in Congo, and they did not have any state schools."

I asked Kankasa about her activities during this time, and she rattled off a list of projects and issues she tackled, including the organization of blood drives among Zambian women and the arranging of proper burials for unclaimed bodies in the morgue. "The other activity that I was doing was to stop women from going to the beer halls and drinking and leaving their children," she said. "I was teaching them the goodness of being a de-

cent woman. Many people appreciated our work. We had a lot of members in our party. . . . I gave myself up to the nation."

I settled my pen in my notebook and considered Kankasa's words. I had spoken to her on the phone three times before traveling to Lusaka to interview her, and she knew that I had come all the way from Maine to hear her life story. Of course, I could not expect her to catalogue her failures and disappointments. I knew I would be fed a steady diet of her accomplishments as she saw them, and I had to do my best to verify her stories in the archives. But as I sat in her living room, I felt guilty that I was second-guessing this regal woman who was considered a heroine in her own country. My job was to hear her story as she wanted to tell it. I could worry about checking the details later.

Between 1964 and 1972, Kankasa said, she kept herself busy with a wide variety of projects in Lusaka. Donors from the capitalist West, from the Soviet Union and its allies, and from communist China were trying to win influence in Zambia, as a newly independent, nonaligned country, through the dispersal of foreign aid. In addition to her work on women's issues, Kankasa supervised an urban planning project in the Kuwata ward of Lusaka and was made responsible for organizing the construction of a workers' "Citizenship College" sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in West Germany.

"My dear young lady, this work of responsibility was not easy," Kankasa told me:

> I was given the responsibility of overseeing the construction. The first brick was put down by . . . President [Kaunda] and a representative from West Germany. When the things came from West Germany—beds, mattresses, towels, everything for the kitchen, even the spoons—they came to me, and I had to make sure that they were used properly. When it was completed, and it was opened, an ILO [International Labor Organization] representative was there. The ILO representative said, that this was a "woman's college," because he had seen how hard Mrs. Kankasa had worked to make it a reality, working together with the workers. Can you see how I excel in all difficult fields of human endeavors? I had three responsibilities: finishing the Citizenship College, finishing my project in Kuwata, and looking after women's problems. My dear Kristen, I was not a woman to sleep!"

"And you had ten children," I said.

"Yes. Those who were from before independence, I used to carry them

FIGURE 4.3
Chibesa Kankasa, 1975.

on my back," Kankasa laughed. "But those who were born after independence, at least by then I had some money to buy a pram."

By the early 1970s, internal divisions amongst Zambians led to the creation of a new political party to challenge the continued dominance of UNIP: the United Progressive Party (UPP). Members of the Women's Brigade rallied behind Kaunda and organized protests against the formation of the UPP in which they cried and ululated to oppose the internal challenge to UNIP rule. Hostile colonial regimes—particularly the British in Rhodesia and South Africa and the Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola—surrounded Zambia. The country hosted many leftist, pro-independence fighters from these neighboring countries, and Chinese and Soviet foreign aid supported the various rebel encampments within its borders. Kaunda feared that unfriendly elements from Rhodesia and South Africa (supported by the capitalist nations of the West) bankrolled his political opponents. Using concerns about foreign influence as a rationale, Kaunda formed a commission to rewrite Zambia's constitution, transforming it from a multiparty system into a "one party participatory democracy." The second Zambian Republic was born in 1972. All political parties except UNIP were banned.

It was during this transition from the First Zambian Republic to the Second Zambian Republic that Kankasa was appointed as a member of the UNIP Central Committee. "At that time, in the one-party system, the

FIGURE 4.4
Chibesa Kankasa with the UNIP Women's Brigade, 1982.

Central Committee was the highest organ of the government," Kankasa said. "I was appointed the chairman of women's affairs. They gave me a committee consisting of women to work with me."

Kankasa and the UNIP-WB (which was renamed the Women's League in 1975) dealt with women's issues at the state level and were empowered to act on behalf of women by UNIP. It was also the Women's League that would organize and send delegations to the three conferences during the UN Decade for Women, and Kankasa would personally sign the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on behalf of Zambia at the Copenhagen congress in 1980. In 1983, Kaunda also created a Women's Affairs Committee as an advisory policy-making body to complement the political work of the Women's League in mobilizing and organizing Zambian women. Both the UNIP Women's League and the Women's Affairs Committee had contact with East European women's committees, including the Committee of the Bulgarian

Women's Movement in Bulgaria, and Kankasa and her comrades actively coordinated their efforts with socialist women's activists around the world.

The UNIP Women's Brigade/League

Like other state socialist women's committees, the UNIP-WL has been derided by Western scholars, accused of being a tool of the male elites in UNIP that supposedly did more to serve the party than to advance the cause of women's rights. According to its critics, the UNIP-WL was a state-based organization and therefore not independent of the government, which maintained control over its activities. Although Zambia allowed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), all women's groups had to be affiliated with the league, particularly if they wanted to access resources made available through international aid. From 1975 to 1991, the UNIP-WL dominated all activities aimed at improving Zambian women's lives.

Foreign observers have therefore questioned the legitimacy of the organization. For example, in her doctoral thesis, written in 1976, and her 1979 book, *New Women of Lusaka*, Ilsa Schuster studied the lives of young educated women in Zambia's capital.[4] She claimed that the UNIP-WL was a bastion of social conservatism, using its power and influence to preserve the traditional Zambian gender roles of wife and mother. Rather than promoting women's autonomy by lessening their economic dependence on men, Schuster argues, Kankasa and the UNIP-WL promoted only those legal reforms and programs that did not threaten the deeply ingrained Zambian patriarchy. In a later study, Schuster argued that the leaders of the UNIP-WL and other female politicians within the party did little to serve ordinary Zambian women's interests and actually helped to reinforce the idea that politics was a man's domain.[5] Because the UNIP-WL had a monopoly on women's issues in Zambia, ordinary Zambian women were discouraged from forming independent feminist organizations or movements, a critique similar to those leveled at state socialist women's organizations in Eastern Europe.

A decade later, in 1986, a report on Zambian women for the Canadian International Development Agency asserted that the UNIP-WB had done little to integrate women into development programs prior to 1975: "Only during the past ten years, since the UN Decade for Women began, has Zambia begun to address the 'problem' of integrating women in development. Before International Women's Year in 1975, there was little concern shown in Zambia for women's issues and needs."[6] The Canadians also felt

that the organization was too traditional because it focused on so-called home economics courses left over from the colonial era.[7]

In 1987, Gisela Geisler, a doctoral candidate at the University of Münster, in West Germany, published a scathing indictment of Chibesa Kankasa and the UNIP-WL. Geisler discussed the appalling status of women in Zambia after the UN Decade for Women and squarely blamed the lack of progress on the retrograde politics of the WL and its monopoly on women's organizing: "The Women's League has never endeavored to be the mass organization of Zambian women it purports to be. It reflects the gaps between rural and urban, educated and uneducated, older and younger, married and single women in Zambia. Furthermore the League was directed by the dominant male bureaucracy into an effective instrument to deepen and broaden the gaps and spur on the 'war between women,' thus preventing a 'war between the sexes.'"[8]

In Geisler's view, the UNIP-WL selfishly championed the needs of a minority of Zambian women, and she catalogued a long list of grievances against the UNIP government for its failure to promote women's rights. Despite the long history of the UNIP-WB and the subsequent UNIP-WL, women in Zambia were still rendered the property of their husbands under the existing marriage laws; were forced to hand over their earnings; and were granted no inheritance or assets if their husbands died or divorced them, even when the wife substantially contributed to family income during the marriage. Bank accounts and loans generally still required permission from the husband, as did access to contraception and abortion. Geisler lamented that traditional ideals of wifedom and motherhood still dominated Zambian society and noted that the UNIP-WL perpetuated rather than protested these traditional norms. According to Geisler, "The Women's League has mainly attracted the older urban women, with little or no formal education, who managed to establish themselves as wives in the colonial period. . . . They often represented the better off 'elite' of urban African dwellers, like the mine workers of the Copperbelt. They demanded better 'European style' living conditions, and even at times supported their husbands in strike actions for better wages in order to attain more status."[9]

Geisler would go on to publish several more articles and a book about women's issues in southern Africa,[10] and her negative opinion of the UNIP-WL never wavered, even after the fall of UNIP in 1991 and the return of independent women's organizing in the form of feminist NGOs. When these independent NGOs proved to be as ineffective at challenging

the continued dominance of Zambian patriarchy, and the material conditions of ordinary women's lives arguably declined as post-UNIP structural adjustment policies dismantled Zambia's social safety net, Geisler continued to blame Zambia's lack of feminist consciousness on the legacy of Kankasa and the UNIP-WL, which had reified a certain ideal of conservative Zambian femininity and reinforced traditional stereotypes about women's "natural" subservience to men.[11]

But others disagreed with these negative sentiments. In 1988 and 1989, Anne Touwen-van der Kooij conducted anthropological fieldwork in Zambia and prepared a special report for the Dutch Volunteers Organization on two Zambian women's organizations: the UNIP-WL and the Young Women's Christian Association.[12] Touwen also lamented the poor status of Zambian women, who could not own their own land and who had been harmed rather than helped by the modernization process. Foreign aid to the agricultural sector had been funneled to Zambian men who grew cash crops through industrial farming, leaving Zambian women to grow the food crops necessary to provide for their families. Rural women lacked access to basic healthcare, education, and transportation infrastructure, continued to suffer low societal status, and had little knowledge about their political and legal rights as citizens. Like Geisler, Touwen found deep divisions among women, with young professional women eschewing politics because they saw UNIP as dominated by older, uneducated, and conservative women: "Educated women saw the women of the WL as just slaves of the party, ready to come and demonstrate, or welcome visiting dignitaries of their states, and they do not feel at home in the more traditional culture of the League."[13]

But Touwen also recognized the work that the UNIP-WL had done in setting up a vast network of almost two thousand women's clubs across the country. Following the UNIP party structure at the national, provincial, and district level, the league had designated affiliates throughout Zambia, a structure very similar to the women's committees of the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Although they were organized by women outside the local community, lacked adequate funding, and did not necessarily reach the poorest women in Zambia (who had no time away from their agricultural responsibilities), they proved popular with many Zambian women because they gave them a reason to get away from the house and socialize with other women. Officials of UNIP had apparently convinced husbands that their wives' attendance at these women's clubs was an acceptable activity.

While it remained true that these UNIP women's clubs primarily offered classes on sewing, knitting, and cooking, there were hopes that they could be used to build women's leadership capacity, and they provided an avenue for foreign aid donors to organize work among women.[14] Touwen agreed that, despite the women's clubs' many shortcomings, their organizational structure proved an effective way to reach women at the grassroots level. As an example, she cited a child immunization campaign funded in 1988 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): "To start the campaign the WL organized a workshop with all provincial political secretaries, the provincial medical officers, all of the provincial women's leagues, and some donor agencies. Seminars at the provincial level followed and the campaign was a success."[15]

After Kaunda allowed multiparty elections and UNIP lost power in 1991, feminists hoped that democracy would increase women's political participation in Zambia. But Bertha Z. Osei-Hwedie found that political participation among women did not improve after UNIP's fall.[16] In her historical assessment of the UNIP-WL, Osei-Hwedie blamed the persistence of Zambian patriarchy more than the league's leaders for their failure to integrate more women into positions of power. The UNIP-WL had made several proposals, including the creation of a Ministry of Women's Affairs, which were ignored or squashed by the male leadership in UNIP. Osei-Hwedie also noted that lack of resources hindered the work of the league, and the persistence of patriarchy and paucity of funding for women's programs continued after the league was dissolved. Given the structural barriers, the UNIP-WL could act as a pressure group only within the party, and it had some successes in lobbying on behalf of its members.

But the most thorough reassessment of the work of the UNIP-WL is in a master's thesis written at the University of Zambia in 2012.[17] The Zambian author, Lubosi Kikamba, challenges external assessments of the UNIP-WL on the grounds that they were written by Western feminist scholars who have little sensitivity regarding the local context and internal struggles within UNIP. Kikamba argues that the UNIP-WL was not always supportive of the policies of UNIP's male leaders, and the organization struggled for women's rights behind the scenes, working within the political constraints of the one-party state. She starts by emphasizing the important role that Zambian women played in the national independence struggles by mobilizing their identities as wives and mothers, even as they burned their marriage certificates to protest colonial restrictions on the movement of single women. Women's bare-breasted protests embarrassed Brit-

ish colonial officials, who often stepped off planes to face crowds of angry, half-naked African women calling for national independence. Kaunda believed that Zambian women were committed revolutionaries, and UNIP never moved to dissolve the Women's Brigade; instead, it continued to expand the number of state organs responsible for dealing with women's issues. Moreover, Kikamba argues, "Most women joined politics as mothers hoping to liberate themselves and their children from colonial rule and not primarily to challenge existing gender relations."[18] Kankasa and Zambian women like her fought alongside their husbands during the colonial period and continued to believe that Zambia's economic development required cooperation rather than competition between men and women. Kikamba also asserted that the leaders of the UNIP-WL had limited education and little knowledge of the concept of socially constructed gender roles, which became popular among donors to Zambia only after 1991.

In her thesis, based on oral history interviews and primary research in the UNIP archives, Kikamba discusses the importance of the UNIP-WL women's clubs to the lives of ordinary women. Despite their limited budgets, the clubs exposed many Zambian women to national politics for the first time. The idea that women's votes were equal to those of men's and that women had a role in helping to build an independent Zambia was a profoundly transformative experience for some women. The UNIP-WL also encouraged women's economic activities in agriculture and food processing, as well as the education of girls, over the protests of husbands and fathers. This meant that the UNIP-WL also involved itself in the moral policing of women's behavior (which Geisler discussed in detail) to assuage the fears of men. Kikamba explains, "It is because of these issues that the UNIP Women's [B]rigade is condemned for preventing the progress of Zambian women in terms of their political and legal status. However, it is significant to note that African women at this time could not embrace everything that western feminism advocated for [and] most of them had not been exposed to the international women's movement."[19]

Kikamba not only defends the record of the UNIP-WL by showing how it pursued women's programs that were culturally appropriate to Zambia (rather than informed by the precepts of Western feminism). She also rails against the foreign imposition of supposedly correct forms of governance on African nations emerging from colonialism:

> It is important to note that the introduction of one-party states was a phenomenon that was noticed in most new African states. . . .

> [T]here was no reason that democracy in Africa should imitate Western multi-party competition, especially considering that this pluralist form of democracy had no historical roots on the African continent. Besides most of these governments that imposed these one-party states enjoyed massive support from the electorate. Furthermore, it was thought that for African political institutions to reflect African needs rather than the pluralist ideals inherited from the colonial powers, it was important for African governments to prioritise economic development. Newly independent states needed strong leadership to bring about modernization unlike the "short-termist" policies and resource bargaining that multi-party competition encouraged.[20]

Thus, in 2012, after more than two decades of Zambian democracy had failed to appreciably improve the lives of most Zambians, Kikamba is arguing that it is time for a critical reassessment of the achievements of her country's one-party past—particularly, the progress of Zambian women under the stewardship of the UNIP-WL.

From my perspective, the critical scholarship on the UNIP-WL seems to have followed the same pattern as the research on state socialist women's committees in Eastern Europe: Western feminists appear in a country and look for signs of a Western-style women's movement. If they find none, or find forms of women's organizing attached to the state or based on maternalist or essentialized ideals of femininity, they castigate these organizations as ineffective, at best, or, at worst, detrimental to "real" women's organizing. My reading of the UNIP archives concerning the domestic activities of the UNIP-WL left me ambivalent about how much the mass organization managed to do for Zambian women. Although Zambian women played an important role in the struggle for national independence, as with so many social movements around the world, women seem to have been marginalized once opposition elements established political power. During the First Zambian Republic, the UNIP-WB could have provided an avenue for Zambian women to join national politics, but it was poorly funded and largely marginalized from the state's efforts to modernize the economy. Although membership in the UNIP-WB was robust in the immediate postindependence period, it steadily declined as local efforts saw little support from UNIP leaders in Lusaka.[21]

Moreover, rather than mobilizing women to assist with the modernization of Zambia, the Women's Brigade seemed keen on making women

the protectors of morality and some idealized form of authentic Zambian femininity. I found numerous examples of members of the Women's Brigade promising to uphold Zambian traditions. For example, in her opening address to a Consultation on Women's Rights in Zambia in 1970, First Lady Betty Kaunda explained: "The question of women's rights is a controversial issue in our day. When we talk about women's rights we run the risk of antagonizing our men—our husbands, our fathers, our brothers, our colleagues. We have no desire to offend them. . . . *We are not seeking to overthrow tradition*. To the contrary, this Consultation is concerned with the preservation of traditional values. We women of Zambia are working to save our national culture. . . . We are worried when we see lack of respect for tradition, and we know how hard it is to preserve these things in a modern world, especially in the urban areas."[22] Throughout her speech, Betty Kaunda emphasized that Zambian women must be "the custodians of happiness and security in the home" and "the watchdogs of morality in our society" and justified the need for women's rights in terms of the development of Zambia as a nation. At one point in her address, she directed her comments to Zambian men and assured them that Zambian women "do not want to take away your authority and power. We talk about women-power, but we do not mean it as a threat to man-power! We women have talents; we have knowledge and skills; all of us, even those with literally no education, can be leaders in the community. Effective social and economic development of our beloved country is dependent also on the women of Zambia."[23]

Geisler seizes on a literal interpretation of this speech to argue that the UNIP-WB was a fundamentally conservative organization, but a closer inspection of the other speeches and reports submitted to the consultation and published as part of the proceedings belies Betty Kaunda's assurances that the women's rights meetings were only trying to safeguard tradition. For instance, a legal report on the position of Zambian women and children clearly decries the inequalities embedded in customary family law and recommends dramatic changes that would benefit wives, widows, and divorcees and raises the marriage age to sixteen for girls. On the one hand, Betty Kaunda could have sincerely wished that women's future education and training would prove no threat to the traditional Zambian family, or, on the other, she could have been using the rhetoric of tradition strategically, much like the Bulgarian women's committee quoted Lenin when it wanted to criticize a government policy. The problem with reading the transcriptions of speeches is that it is hard to understand the

context within which they were delivered, and since Betty Kaunda died in 2012, one can only infer her intentions.

The documentary records of the Women's Brigade show that the women's clubs were important institutions where UNIP activists taught women to read and write and how to use Zambia's decimal-based currency, a prerequisite for economic activities. The brigade also organized popular poultry cooperatives and special classes for young mothers to combat infant mortality.[24] However, many of its clubs continued to focus on the same homemaking activities that missionaries once emphasized: cooking, knitting, and sewing. Technologies and investments aimed at modernizing agriculture flowed almost exclusively to men, even as UNIP relied on the unremunerated work of Zambian women in subsistence agriculture. Of course, it is helpful to keep Maxine Molyneux's admonition in mind here: feminists should compare women's progress in socialist nations with that of nations at similar levels of economic development (and not with that of advanced capitalist countries). From this point of view, it seems that in the decades immediately following independence, the Women's Brigade did indeed promote women's literacy, numeracy, and education while largely leaving traditional gender roles intact, perhaps because male elites in UNIP saw little reason to promote women's economic emancipation from men, and perhaps because most Zambian women themselves had little interest in pursuing social roles outside those of wife and mother.

To understand the context in which even basic education is progress for women, one has to examine the specific context of colonial Northern Rhodesia and the massive illiteracy that plagued the population. The personal story of Amy Kabwe, a UNIP-WL activist I also interviewed in 2013, highlights the strict nature of rural Zambian patriarchy with relation to the education of girls. Kabwe was born in 1939 and lived with her maternal grandmother in Chimbele, a typical Zambian village in the Northern Province. She said,

> My father was a miner, and I was the first-born child. In those days, no girl should grow up in the Copperbelt, so I was left with my grandmother at the age of one. They didn't want girls to learn this new type of living. They wanted to conserve the traditional ways. So they knew if a woman was spoiled, the whole family would be spoiled, so they preferred for a girl to grow up in a village where she would learn all of those [traditional] things. So I remained in the village, and I grew up. When I was growing up, only boys went to school. We

> didn't have a school in the village. It was about . . . twenty kilometers away, and so boys who went there were weekly boarders. They went on a Sunday and came back on a Friday, and by tradition that was no life for a girl.[25]

Luckily for Kabwe, British missionaries were visiting villages in the Northern Province to see where they could build schools. When the missionaries came to Chimbele, they found a lot of children and asked the villagers whether they wanted a school. If the villages would supply the building, the missionaries would supply the teacher, and soon Kabwe had a school to go to. "In September 1948, I was already nine years old and overgrown," she said, "but I was put in the same class as the six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, eight-year-olds, ten-year-olds; we were a mixture. And to my teacher's surprise, he found that I was very intelligent."

Kabwe excelled in her lessons, and the teacher suggested that she was bright enough to go to a boarding school. She applied, was accepted, and moved away from her grandmother at thirteen. She did so well at the school that, after she completed form six, she won a scholarship to attend Chipembi Girls, the premier girls' school in Zambia. Kabwe was thrilled, but her selection faced a massive obstacle: her father. "My father said, 'No. You are too old. At the age of sixteen, you are too old to continue learning. You know there is a man who is after you, and you must get married,'" she recounted. "And, of course, I could not cry in this presence. So I sneaked out into my room and I cried, 'Oh god, I don't want to be married.' Then an idea came, and I said, 'Let me write to this missionary and tell him that my father wants me to get married.'"

Kabwe was so desperate to get in touch with the missionary that she did not trust the post. Instead, she waited at the local bus stop until she found a friend from school who was going home to her village near the missionary station. She asked her friend to carry the letter directly to the missionary. Within a week, the missionaries sent a representative to speak with Kabwe's father, to convince him that his daughter was intelligent and that she could become a teacher if he allowed her further education. Kabwe told me that her father accepted the idea only because he feared that if he went against the will of the missionaries, he would be cursed. Kabwe's father never supported her education, refusing to buy her clothes or give her pocket money, and after her first year at Chipembi, Kabwe refused to visit her father in the Copperbelt because she feared that he would change his mind. She finished two years at Chipembi and returned

to her village as a teacher. "Because I had this wish to go further in my education, I enrolled in an evening school, and I began cycling to that school," she said. "But the crime rate was so high that I had to stop going. During the night it was so bad. I didn't want to risk my life like this. And at that time, teachers' houses had no lights. So I was reading by candle."

By teaching herself English and making use of correspondence courses based in the United Kingdom, Kabwe earned her General Certificate of Education. Eventually, her talents were recognized by the UNIP leadership, and she moved to Lusaka to work in Zambia's Ministry of Education, where she organized nutrition courses for women. She later went on to earn a bachelor's degree in education and worked within the UNIP government until it lost power in 1991. But Kabwe understood well the difficulties that rural girls faced when they tried to obtain an education, and in 2013 she believed that the most important work of the Women's Brigade and, later, the Women's League was in encouraging fathers to allow their daughters to be educated as part of building an independent Zambia. Kabwe argued that this achievement should not be underestimated, even if it is taken for granted in the West.

In other respects, however, the UNIP-WB/WL was truly conservative, particularly on the issue of reproductive rights for women. Their staunchly pronatalist stance contravened not only the precepts of Western feminism but also those of most socialist states, which saw access to contraception and abortion as fundamental to women's emancipation (with Albania, Romania, and the USSR under Stalin being exceptions). The Bulgarians supported women's right to control fertility but also understood that family planning had different connotations in a still largely agricultural, postcolonial society. Geisler argues that from its very foundations, the Women's Brigades of the ANC and UNIP were aggressively pronatalist, and the issue of birth control was a deeply divisive one in independent Zambia.

Letters exchanged between the Zambian Ministry of Health and Ministry of State between 1969 and 1972 highlight the peculiarities of the local political context. For instance, the Ministry of Health put forward a proposal to make family planning services available throughout the country.[26] The minister of health argued that people were seeking advice on family spacing, and UNIP needed to develop a comprehensive policy on family planning. He explained that there were voluntary organizations willing to provide the "devices and materials," so the implementation of such a program would not be a drain on the state budget. He also expressed concern that "urban and educated" people had the information and resources on

how to space their families, and failing to provide these services to rural populations created an inequality unacceptable under the ideals of Zambian Humanism. Moreover, the minister of health argued that family planning in Zambia would reduce malnutrition, improve maternal health, and provide rural Zambians with a higher standard of living.

In response to the proposals of the Ministry of Health, Minister of State S. J. Soko wrote an angry letter to the UNIP leadership, saying, "I personally see no need for advocating family planning for Zambians at this stage in our development. . . . What actually is our bother about mass production of children in Zambia, Your Honour? Zambia, as a country, is in fact empty. It is to me a shame that with so much space, we should think of curtailing Zambia's population. . . . In my opinion, the Minister of Health must have succumbed to insidious and not well meaning colonial advice from expatriate advisers."[27]

What is fascinating about this exchange is that there is no record of consultation with the Women's Brigade, and maternal health is only one reason given for the family planning policy. Women's rights and the status of women are not even mentioned. Moreover, included among the documents in these archival folders is a 1961 article from the *Rhodesian Herald* arguing that family planning is "the Europeans' trick to keep down the black population and ensure white domination."[28]

Despite the objections of Minister of State Soko and the silence of the Women's Brigade, the UNIP did legalize abortion in the 1972 Termination of Pregnancy Act. In response to the death of female students who received illegal abortions to avoid expulsion from school, the government made hospital abortions legal if a panel of three doctors agreed that continuation of a pregnancy risked injury to "the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman" or "to the physical or mental health of any existing children of the pregnant woman." In making their determination, doctors were allowed to take account of the "pregnant woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment or of her age,"[29] which is fairly liberal language for an abortion law. The problem, of course, is that few Zambian women in 1972 had access to hospitals, so the 1972 Act effectively criminalized non-hospital abortions, which were the services most women used. I found no evidence in the archives of the UNIP-WL that Kankasa and the UNIP-WB ever challenged this law; thus, they maintained a pronatalist, anticontraceptive position throughout the UNIP era. Indeed, in a 1973 "Report on the Development in the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Zambia in 1971" Kankasa opined that "there was one 'discrimi-

natory' legislation enacted during the period under review, to the advantage or disadvantage of women—according to one's beliefs: the Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1972."[30] However, when World Health Organization and UNICEF launched a massive campaign to improve child and maternal health in Zambia, local Women's Brigade clubs helped coordinate these activities, even when they included a family planning component.

Despite UNIP's idealization of women as wives and mothers, the party did encourage women to embrace some nontraditional roles in Zambian society. Retired Colonel Anne Namakando-Phiri explained to me during an interview in 2013 that, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Zambia's freedom and in recognition of the important role played by women in the struggle for national independence, UNIP allowed women to volunteer for Zambian military service. She had been among the first women to join up on September 1, 1974, and she served for thirty-two years before her retirement in 2006. Namakando-Phiri said that "UNIP did many things for Zambian women, especially in those first decades after independence."

Both Kankasa and Namakando-Phiri cited the maternity leave provisions in the 1982 Minimum Wages and Conditions of Employment Act as a direct result of the work of the UNIP-WL and its tireless lobbying of UNIP's Central Committee. The law (still partially in effect in Zambia in 2018) was inspired by similar laws in the Eastern Bloc and guarantees Zambian women ninety days of paid maternity leave, requiring that employers hold a woman's job until she returns. The act further prohibits any form of discrimination against pregnant or nursing women and allows female employees to take a paid leave of absence from their jobs in cases where their children have been hospitalized and require "special attention." Days taken to care for a sick child did not count against a woman's accrued sick days. The efforts of the UNIP-WL in securing special provisions for female employees in 1982 were still acknowledged in 2013; some Zambian women referred to a day they could take off from work to attend to a sick child as a "Kankasa day."

Another battle fought on behalf of Zambian women was a protracted struggle to revise the law on intestate inheritance. Since few Zambians drew up formal wills before their deaths, most relied on a diverse array of customary laws to dispose of the estate of a breadwinner. Although Zambia had seventy-three distinct ethnic groups and the majority were matrilineal, almost without exception customary inheritance laws discriminated against women and left widows and their children destitute upon the death of a husband.[31] Traditionally, Zambian men wishing to marry

must pay a bride price to the family of the woman, the amount of which is determined by negotiations between the two families based on the "quality" of the potential bride (her education, whether she was married or had children before, etc.). Because young men often lack the resources to pay the bride price, their mothers' kin will contribute to the payment, and the wife's future labor and childbearing capacity become the assets of the husband and his matrilineal relatives. Any wealth or land accumulated in the marriage remains the husband's property.

In traditional Zambian matrilineal culture, a man's inheritance passes to his nephew (a sister's son), and nothing is left to his wife and children. To ensure that a widow or widows are cared for, one of the brothers of the deceased marries them and continues to provide support for the children. Another tradition is that a woman must have sexual intercourse with one of her late husband's male relatives before she is allowed to remarry, a practice referred to as "sexual cleansing."[32] These customary practices regarding widows are coupled with "property grabbing," whereby the husband's matrilineal kin seize the man's assets—houses, cars, lands, animals, anything of value—while the wife or wives are in mourning.[33] In some cases, the relatives break into the marital house and steal pots, pans, radios, mattresses, pillows, and bedclothes. Widows are left utterly impoverished, even if their wages paid for the household goods or their labor helped build the house or till the land.

In 1982, UNIP's Law Development Commission published *Report on the Law of Succession*.[34] Lobbied by the Women's League to do something to improve the position of widows, and concerned by the increasing incidence of property grabbing and the growing number of impoverished female-headed households, the commission mounted a major fact-finding mission throughout Zambia to investigate the varied practice of customary law and how it discriminated against women. The UNIP government reasoned that it had a responsibility to look after the weaker members of society and asserted that the modernization of Zambian society meant larger urban populations and more intertribal marriages, facts that necessitated legal reform. Finally, the UNIP government wanted to encourage the formation and stability of modern nuclear, patrilineal families over the traditional extended, matrilineal families of the past.[35]

In the fact-finding mission, however, the Law Development Commission discovered that the vast majority of Zambians were satisfied with customary laws. Defenders of tradition reasoned that wives and children might conspire to kill their husbands and fathers if they stood to gain fi-

nancially from their deaths, and it was unfair that wives who might have married a husband only recently would have greater rights over his property than his maternal kin, who had contributed to his ability to marry in the first place. Moreover, nothing in customary law prevented a man from writing a will if he wished his property to be distributed to his wife (or wives) and children. The weight of public opinion, the Law Development Commission found, was in favor of leaving customary laws intact. It nevertheless recommended the need for legislative change. Reviewing the report in 1983, the legal scholar Simon Coldham opined, "It is surprising, therefore, that the Commission aligned itself wholeheartedly with the advocates of change and drafted a Bill which radically transforms the law of succession and retains so few features of customary law that the whole research and consultation exercise seems to have been futile."[36]

In her critique of the UNIP-WL, Geisler faults the league for the glacial speed of change surrounding the passage of the Intestate Succession Act of 1989, particularly compared with the reforms pushed through in neighboring Zimbabwe in the year immediately following its independence in 1980.[37] But given the societal resistance to change in this regard, particularly from rural women, it is remarkable that the UNIP government managed to pass a law that protected the rights of both widows and children. The act divides property so that the wife automatically gets 20 percent of the man's estate, and the children receive 50 percent. Parents of the deceased are guaranteed 20 percent, and his "other dependents" get 10 percent.[38] The law also states that personal effects and his house belong to the wife (or wives) and children of the deceased man and thereby contravenes much customary law, as the act leaves nothing for the man's matrilineal kin (especially his nephews) unless they are classified as "dependents."

Indeed, the Zambian Intestate Succession Act of 1989 is unique because it makes no concession to customary laws and is clearly written to protect the widow or widows from property grabbing by the husband's family and to benefit the patrilineal nuclear family—that is, the spouse(s) and child(ren) of the deceased. In his review of the act, Coldham marveled at its overturning of Zambian tradition and noted, with incredulity, that the new law treated all Zambians equally, writing, "At no point are sexual distinctions taken into account; wives and husbands are treated identically as are daughters and sons, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, etc. In all these respects, the Zambian reforms are much more ambitious than reforms carried out elsewhere in Commonwealth Africa."[39]

It is worth noting that even as late as 2013, property grabbing and

widow marriage to brothers-in-law continued, and few rural women were aware of the 1989 law or how to use it to protect their rights. The Intestate Succession Act mostly benefited urban women aware of its provisions and able to avail themselves of the judicial system. Similarly, the maternity leave provisions of the labor law apply only to women employed in the formal economy and therefore benefit urban, professional women at the expense of rural women working in agriculture. Given the strength of rural resistance to legislative reform, and the near-impossibility of enforcing such reform, the Women's League's lobbying activities did favor only a small minority of Zambian women. But given the many challenges of liberating women from rural Zambian patriarchy, it would be unfair to fault the leaders of the UNIP-WL for not living up to Western feminists' expectations. Moreover, relative to the pre-independence era before 1964 and the multiparty democratic era after 1991, Zambian women saw the most improvements to the material conditions of their lives during the UNIP era, particularly when one considers the free access to education and healthcare they once enjoyed.

Thus, depending on the standards one employs to determine success, the domestic record of the UNIP-WL is mixed. The league had some small triumphs but left many issues untouched. It always coordinated with male elites, and many of its policies furthered the aims of Zambian Humanism and the modernization goals of UNIP. But it also pushed the government to challenge intransigent local customs and lobbied for legislation that still benefits Zambian women to this day. Most important for this book, Zambia found itself caught between East and West as the superpowers struggled for markets and geopolitical influence during the Cold War. The Zambians initially tried to maintain a nonaligned position that allowed them to accept multiple sources of aid. But after the constitutional reform of 1972, the UNIP-WL's emphasis on state-driven solutions to women's problems placed the league squarely in the camp of the East European socialists during the UN Decade for Women, allowing it to forge alliances that would challenge the ideals of Western, liberal feminism. But the UNIP-WL's work was always embroiled in the greater geopolitics of the Cold War.

5. Sandwiched between Superpowers

At her suggestion, I met Lily Monze in the café area of a SPAR supermarket in a suburb of Lusaka because they offered free coffee and tea to senior citizens on Tuesdays. A tall woman with a wide, warm smile, Monze had already saved a table when I arrived. She stood to great me with an outstretched hand. "Welcome. Welcome," she said. "It is a great pleasure to meet you."

Dressed in a colorful matching *chitenge* blouse and headdress, Monze radiated ease. The café was filled with people, and there would be a lot of background noise in my recording of our conversation, but I could tell that she enjoyed being out in public. Monze called herself a "woman's activist," and she started representing Zambia at women's conferences beginning in the late 1960s. She attended the UN women's conferences in Copenhagen and Nairobi and had prepared to attend the first congress in Mexico City, but something happened at the last minute, and she did not make the trip. She had served her country as a minister of state for finance and development and had been a member of the International Women's Year "operations" committee organized for the theme of "development," both facts that I verified in the archives.[1] Monze also worked at the African Development Bank and was later appointed Zambia's ambassador to France. She further served as a member of the first board of directors of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in 1979. I got her phone number from Anne Namakando-Phiri, and when I called Monze to request an interview, she took a keen interest in my project and seemed eager to help.

"Can you tell me a little about yourself?" I asked, switching on my recorder.

"I was born in 1936, and I was the first child, with all of the responsibilities that this entails," Monze said. She spoke slowly and clearly in a deep, resonant voice.

Monze's autobiographical narrative highlighted the possibilities that became available for women after Zambia's independence. Her father, Moses Mubitana, was a teacher and a politician who encouraged his daughter's education in the local missionary schools. She eventually ended up at Chipembi Girls, the premier school for young women in the country, and later went on to earn a degree from the University College of Nyasaland and Rhodesia in 1959, one of three women out of a hundred graduates. Monze became the first Zambian woman to earn a university degree. She returned to Northern Rhodesia to become a teacher at Chipembi, and after Zambia's independence in 1964, she took up a variety of posts in the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government, most dealing with educational policy for the new republic. She left Zambia for a short while when her husband was appointed to represent Zambia in the Organization of African Unity in Ethiopia, and it was after she returned that she became a politician in the UNIP government, dealing primarily with international economic and technical assistance. Although she never served in a formal capacity in the UNIP Women's League (UNIP-WL), she told me that she often worked together with them "because these women were trying to do a lot of good things for Zambia."

Monze's first exposure to the international women's movement occurred in Moscow in 1967 when she was sent to represent Zambia at a conference co-hosted by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and the Soviet Women's Committee.[2] Presided over by the cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, the conference brought together women's activists from thirty-four African countries to discuss the role of women in society. Monze told me a story that she claimed she had never told anyone before, about an embarrassing episode at her first international congress. "I didn't know the protocol," she said, placing a palm on her forehead.

After pre-designated speakers finished delivering the opening addresses, protocol required Tereshkova to ask whether any of the delegates wished to address the congress. Not realizing that this was a mere formality, Monze pressed the button and was yielded the floor. She told me that she stood before the whole congress and said that she was very impressed by

the progress of Russian women, and especially that Tereshkova had been to space, but, raising her fist, she said there was still much work to be done. "Even here," Monze told the assembly, "When are we going to have a woman president? When are we going to have it?"

Monze's unexpected speech initially stunned the more seasoned women's activists, and the Soviet organizers must have been unsure of what to do. But the delegates started to clap. "My dear, they gave me a standing ovation," Monze told me. "An ovation!" During the break, Tereshkova sought out Monze, had her photograph taken with her, and gave her a coin commemorating Tereshkova as the first female cosmonaut, which Monze still treasured. The meeting was Monze's first trip to a communist country and her first experience at an "international meeting of that grandeur." Because she had spoken out, the United Nations representatives in attendance also sought her out, and afterward Monze told me that UN officials often requested that she represent Zambia at future international meetings. "You know, it gave me confidence from that time," she said. "I got to know the procedures and how it was. I learned the hard way, but I didn't pay for it. Instead I was rewarded."

Although Monze did not know it at the time, telling a congress of international women in the Soviet Union that the Soviets still had a lot of work to do where women's issues were concerned was incredibly brave, and probably unprecedented. In the late 1960s, the Soviets imagined themselves as the champions of women's issues, and although they were well ahead of the capitalist West in many respects, Monze correctly pointed to a lack of Soviet women in high leadership positions. Despite the many gains that women had made in the state socialist countries, men dominated international politics, and the global machinations of the Cold War remained an exclusively male affair. This was especially true in small, newly independent countries in Africa.

Cold War Strategies at the United Nations

Before I turn to the specific events of the International Women's Year and the subsequent UN Decade for Women, it is important to pause, go back to the early 1960s, and reflect on the politics of the United Nations between 1945 and 1985. The postwar world was divided into ideological blocs, and these formations often dictated the political and economic possibilities for countries emerging from the shackles of Western colonialism, whether they liked it or not. After Zambia's independence, Ken-

neth Kaunda and the UNIP leadership initially tried to walk the path of nonalignment, allying with neither the capitalist West nor the communist East. But the two superpowers, as well as China, had designs of their own and craved political influence on the African continent. African countries had bountiful natural resources, and new nations provided new export markets for industrial goods and services. But the superpowers also had ideological motivations for seeking influence in Africa and hoped to build alliances, which could be strategically deployed at the United Nations. In a December 1, 1964 report on "Communist Potentialities in Tropical Africa," the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) surveyed the prospects of increased Soviet and Chinese influence in the African nations vying for independence and noted that "it would, of course, be a grievous political setback to the West if most of Africa became something of a 'denied area.' That is, a continent where US planes could not land or its ships refuel. Or a place where general hostility toward Western interests was somehow orchestrated and some 35 states as a matter of course delivered pro-Communist votes in the UN."[3]

Declassified documents from the US State Department and the CIA show increasing US attention to Africa, particularly after President John F. Kennedy's appointment of G. Mennen Williams as a special assistant secretary of state for African affairs in 1961.[4] For six years, Williams helped to steer US foreign policy toward Africa and increased American aid levels to counterbalance the growing influence of Soviet and Chinese assistance. From the very beginning, attention was given to women's issues; on his second trip to Africa in 1961, Williams dedicated a special section of his secret report to the future role of African women. He decried their inferior status and observed that, while African men were "being caught up in the world of the twentieth century," women were being left behind, despite the fact that they did most of the hard labor in African societies. Williams not only believed that educating women was the "morally right" thing to do, but he argued that it might assist in the creation of market economies:

> It is often said, particularly by proponents of white supremacy, that the African is not interested in work and therefore cannot be brought into the cash economy. This is largely the basis, for example, on which the Portuguese have justified six months of compulsory labor under contract from Africans who cannot pay taxes. . . . [But] should the women of Africa decide that they want more of the good things of life for themselves and their children (sewing machines,

> clothes, radios, education), they will find a way to make their husbands work harder. This in turn could give great stimulus to the consumer economies of the states under consideration, would tend to develop and strengthen middle class trading groups, and would generally benefit the whole of society.[5]

Williams suggested that the United States should sponsor a study to examine the possibility of "making the women of Africa more desirous of raising the standard of living of their families," perhaps believing that women's "natural" acquisitiveness could also mitigate against the spread of communism on the continent.

Despite his early 1960s gender sensibilities, Williams was generally a proponent of African self-government and disapproved of the brutal treatment and political disenfranchisement of black Africans. But in the context of the Cold War, Williams also recognized that African "white supremacists" could easily curry favor with the US government by claiming that African demands for independence were fundamentally communist: "Those who most violently oppose the development of African nationalism link it directly and inextricably with Communism. Even among those who recognize the ultimate necessity of the participation of black Africans in government, there is a tendency to apply the brakes owing to this fear."[6] Throughout the 1960s, the CIA continued to document Soviet activities in Africa carefully, noting the role of "Soviet-controlled 'front' organizations, and their penetration of Pan-African organisations," particularly those that brought together trade unionists, journalists, students, youth, and women.[7] The CIA also warned about the important role being played by the Soviet Union's East European "satellites," which further extended communist influence into Africa. According to the CIA report, the East European countries strategically established bilateral trade relations with African countries to avoid duplication of efforts:

> Thus Czechoslovakia, as the most highly industrialized state, is generally the first to make trade and aid agreements, or to develop industrial projects with an African state after it has established relations with Communist countries. . . . Poland has concentrated on shipping, East Germany on trade union training and youth meetings, Hungary on the training of journalists, and Bulgaria on assistance with agriculture. Yugoslavia has played a rather special part; its "non-aligned" image and socialist system which has not been

> bound by the straight-jacket of doctrinaire Communism has given it a thriving export trade of "experts" and advisors in a wide variety of fields.[8]

Zambia established diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union and the East European countries soon after independence. These bilateral relations resulted in offers of trade, aid, and cultural cooperation. Despite its nonaligned status, Zambia received $15 million in direct aid from the Soviet Union and $60 million from the East European countries between 1964 and 1979,[9] and hundreds of Zambian youth were sent to the Eastern Bloc for education and training. The Zambians signed a technical agreement with the Yugoslavs in 1965 and sent a delegation to study the technical education system in the GDR in 1966.[10] Zambia also signed official "cultural cooperation" agreements with the Soviet Union, and the Soviets offered nineteen scholarships for a nine-month youth training course in Moscow, to which Zambia sent thirteen students in 1966.[11] In the same year, the USSR offered three fully paid scholarships for girls wishing to study in any specialty of their choice.[12] In 1967, Zambia signed an agreement with Czechoslovakia for technical and scientific cooperation, which included many cultural exchanges.[13] Part of this exchange program concerned education—specifically, the education of Zambian women and youth. The United National Independence Party also sent party members to Romania for political education.[14]

In terms of Pan-African organizations, Zambian women participated in the conferences and regional meetings of the All-African Women's Conference (AAWC), which worked closely with the WIDF and its member organizations.[15] A report by the Zambian Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted the activities of the AAWC between 1962 and 1972, which included a WIDF solidarity meeting in East Berlin in 1965 about the situation of women in Vietnam; the WIDF–Soviet Women's Committee conference in Moscow in March 1967, attended by representatives from thirty-four African countries (and Lily Monze); the 1969 Celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the GDR also in East Berlin, and the WIDF's sixth World Congress of Women in Helsinki in 1969.[16]

In July 1972, an AAWC-WIDF seminar held in Tanzania brought women's activists from across Africa together with representatives of the Eastern Bloc women's committees, and speakers condemned the twin evils of colonialism and capitalism. Betty Kaunda, the First Lady of Zambia, gave a passionate closing speech to the women in attendance, saying,

> We have a duty to Africa, the liberation of our continent, politically, economically, socially and culturally, is a responsibility of all of Africa's people. Africa's women must make their impact felt in all fields in order to strengthen the foundations of our revolutions. Our women must participate in Africa's task to restore the rights of the oppressed people of Southern Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. They have a big share of responsibility in combatting international capitalism and exploitation. This is as it should be, because Africa's women are part and parcel of the lines of defense against those whose interest is to keep Africa in a state of perpetual bondage.[17]

Because of the growing affinities between Zambian women's leaders and women's activists in the socialist countries, the UNIP Women's Brigade (UNIP-WB) applied for formal membership in the WIDF in 1971. But Zambia's male leaders worried that an official affiliation with the WIDF would undermine Zambia's commitment to nonalignment, and internal letters between the minister of foreign affairs and the secretary of administration reveal the UNIP government's hesitation: "The W.I.D.F. has a membership of ninety-three countries and has over two-million members. The headquarters is based in Berlin G.D.R. and was formed shortly after the war. . . . This organization is aligned. During my discussion with the delegation which visited Zambia recently I discovered that they are a pawn of the Soviet Union and their membership comprises of [*sic*] countries which support the Soviet Socialist countries. Before the Central Committee makes a decision the Party should send a high power delegation of women to go and assess and report back the activities of this organization."[18] In the same year that Zambian officials worried about joining an "aligned" women's organization, however, Chibesa Kankasa received and accepted an invitation to visit West Germany as the guest of Lenelotte von Bothmer, a member of the German Bundestag. The official approval letters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirm that the West Germans paid for all of Kankasa's expenses related to the trip.[19]

Von Bothmer was a prominent West German feminist (she had caused a national scandal in October 1970 by wearing a pantsuit while giving a speech in the Bundestag), and the visit was sponsored "so that the contacts between Mrs. Kankasa and German women who occupy a leading position in political life may be intensified."[20] The Zambians jumped at the opportunity to send Kankasa to West Germany, and UNIP officials often

pointed out their own inconsistency and hypocrisy where the policy of nonalignment was concerned. Throughout the Cold War, Zambia's leaders used the country's nonaligned status to maximize aid and technical assistance from both the First World and the Second World. For instance, in a letter dated August 8, 1967, Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs M. C. Chona celebrated what he called the "agreement week." Within the span of five days Zambia had signed cooperation agreements with Western Germany, China, USSR, Israel, and Great Britain, countries at all points on the ideological spectrum.[21]

If the opportunism of the Zambians seems excessive, it must be remembered that the superpowers treated countries like Zambia largely as political minions to be controlled and deployed against the ideological enemy. The Western capitalist countries and the Eastern state socialist countries expended vast resources to woo developing nations, not only for access to their natural resources and export markets, but also to bolster their power and influence at the United Nations, where superpowers jockeyed for support and approval from the international community. Women's issues were just another front on which the superpowers competed.

For example, in 1966, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was debating the text of a draft Declaration on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (which would later become the Convention on Elimination of All Discrimination against Women). Gladys Tillet, the US representative, was under instructions to ensure that the text did not contradict US law.[22] The specific phrase the US delegation wanted to avoid in the draft text was "all States shall," which would have obliged governments to pass laws in accord with the principles laid out in the declaration. The classified report Tillet sent back to the State Department reflected the intense Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies.[23] Tillet's report clearly exposed US machinations to use developing countries' delegates to stack the votes in favor of American proposals. Early in the report, she detailed how she was "steadily checking" on the arrivals and credentials of the delegates from Mexico, Honduras, Chile, and the Dominican Republic, women who were under instructions to vote with the United States. Later in her report, however, Tillet bemoaned the quality of the women sent to represent their countries at the CSW: "With the exception of Mexico who is outstanding, Government officials in Latin America appear to pay no attention to the need for developing leadership in the Commission as a

means of strengthening their own countries. Instead the present pattern appears to be to appoint the wives of Ambassadors. They are instructed to co-operate with the U.S. but since they lack experience and tenure, they offer little possibility for development of leadership in this Hemisphere."[24]

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, similar machinations were occurring with the Bulgarians. Another example of the superpowers' strategically allying with Third World countries such as Zambia occurred at the International Labor Organization (ILO). In the archives of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) I discovered a stenographic protocol of a lecture delivered by Zdravka Peeva in 1966. This was an oral report to the women's committee about the Bulgarian delegation's activities during a period when the ILO was considering a document regarding the paid employment of women with children. The Bulgarian government sent Peeva as a delegate among the employers, and she was only one of two women among the group of employers discussing the document concerning women's labor.

In her report, Peeva discussed the serious polarization that occurred between the capitalist and communist countries regarding the language in the proposed document on women's labor. In Geneva, she learned firsthand about the value of cooperation with nations of the Global South. Peeva explained that the delegates from the Eastern Bloc countries formed a caucus to coordinate their proposals: "Within this group, we discussed in advance all of the notes and proposals we put forward. We hoped to go into an open battle, and attack from the start. That is what we did: first and foremost, we discussed the notes and proposals in our group. Then we put our suggestions forward in writing, either on behalf of our country, or on behalf of our delegates."[25]

Peeva went on to describe how every single one of their proposals, even the most humble, got shot down by delegates from the capitalist countries. It soon became clear that their proposals were being refuted merely because they were put forward by the Eastern Bloc caucus. If they wanted to make their contributions at the ILO count, the socialist delegates needed to find a different strategy. Peeva told the Committee of Bulgarian Women in 1966:

> We could clearly see that were bound to fall short in this way and that we could not pass a single one of our resolutions, proposals or amendments. Later on, we took up a different tactic. It consisted of the following: many supporters of new ideas were attracted to our

> delegation of representatives from the socialist countries. Representatives of African and newly liberated countries (representatives of countries such as Algeria, Libya, United African Republic) came together and openly expressed their sympathy. We decided to utilize them in order to propose amendments for the second time, with a slightly different text, but still with the same content. This happened in the following way: the amendment was put forward by a representative of [an African or newly liberated] country. We remained silent during the discussion and did not express our position. Only when we saw that the scales were tipping in favor of the amendment would we simply contribute our opinion at the end to make a majority. Several of our amendments were accepted in this way.[26]

Peeva's frank discussion of the value of working with the representatives from the newly independent countries demonstrates that Second World women understood early on that they needed to form strategic alliances with women from the developing nations.

The rivalry for influence for the countries of the Global South increased the geopolitical importance of small nations such as Zambia within the broader context of the Cold War. Yes, they had domestic markets and natural resources, but they also had votes in the General Assembly and rotating memberships on the various committees and commissions of the UN system. I once asked Chibesa Kankasa to tell me about her memories from the UN Decade for Women and her role as the leader of the Zambian women's committee. She had a clear memory of traveling as the head of the UNIP-WL with the Soviet Women's Committee in the early 1980s. They had lunch in a restaurant in a hotel on the border of Soviet Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The Soviets had built a new highway into Kabul, and Kankasa's Russian hosts wanted her to see it.

A week or so later, she was traveling with her husband, who was then Zambia's foreign minister and representing the Non-Aligned Movement. The Afghans took Kankasa and her husband to the same restaurant in the hotel in Tajikistan. The staff in the restaurant recognized Kankasa and started whispering about her. Kankasa's husband inquired why the staff was talking about his wife, and one of the waiters explained that they had recently served her with the official delegation of the Soviet Women's Committee. The staff assumed that she must be a very important person to be back in the same restaurant, now eating with such prominent members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Although Kankasa understood that

both trips were about increasing Soviet influence over Zambia, she reveled in the attention.

During the Cold War, representatives of governments from across the developing world could choose from two different paths to modernization: capitalism and socialism. To the extent that women's emancipation served as an important index for social progress, leaders such as Chibesa Kankasa also had to choose a path for the women of their countries. Given the ongoing machinations in the realm of international diplomacy, it is little wonder that the three world conferences in 1975, 1980, and 1985 became yet another battleground in the ongoing war to prove the ideological superiority of competing political and economic systems.

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Part II. The Women's Cold War

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6. The Lead-Up to International Women's Year

Henry David Thoreau once said, "Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes,"[1] but I was going to have to go shopping if I wanted an audience with Her Royal Highness Senior Chieftainess Nkomeshya Mukamambo II, a longtime politician with the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and a key figure in the Zambian women's movement who attended the First World Conference on Women in 1975. Together with Lily Monze, Nkomeshya had served as a member of the International Women's Year (IWY) "operations" committee to prepare Zambia's program on the theme of development.[2] It was Anne Namakando-Phiri who suggested that I try to interview Nkomeshya, who, in Namakando-Phiri's words, was "a very prominent person in Zambia." I asked Chibesa Kankasa to help me organize the meeting. I had to prepare a formal list of questions that I would ask, and Kankasa's driver had to hand deliver them to Nkomeshya's palace in Chongwe, an area outside of Lusaka. Her advisers would inform me, through Kankasa, whether or not she had time to meet with me before I returned to the United States.

Nkomeshya agreed, and on the appointed day, Kankasa and her driver picked me up, and we drove through the outskirts of Lusaka toward Chongwe, the lush southern African countryside speeding past the window. I tried to take photographs and shoot video of the scenery but spent most of the thirty-minute journey chatting with Kankasa in the back of the car. She was feeling loquacious and told me that she had worked for many years with Nkomeshya as part of the UNIP government before 1991. Nkomeshya was a powerful woman in Zambia, respected as both a tribal leader and a politician.[3] We were to meet her in her office in Chongwe,

FIGURE 6.1 Chibesa Kankasa (left) and Chieftainess Nkomeshya (right).

and not at her palace, which was outside of the town. I learned from the driver that the chief of the Soli people used to have his palace in Chongwe, but when Nkomeshya ascended to the throne, she donated the building to house a hospital.

I was nervous about the meeting because I did not know the appropriate etiquette and hoped I would not do anything wrong. Colonel Namakando-Phiri was supposed to come with us, but she canceled at the last minute, and so I had to take my cues from Kankasa. When I finally met the regal chieftainess, my nerves were a mess, but she was warm and effusive and put me at ease in an instant. I asked her permission to record our interview, and she nodded assent. Nkomeshya granted me almost two hours of her time.

In the years immediately following independence, Elizabeth Nkomeshya worked in the Zambian civil service and hoped for a career in government. But in 1971, after the murder of her uncle, who was the chief of the Soli people (the second royal death in just two years), the Soli elders decided to make young Nkomeshya a chieftainess. After Zambia's independence, Kenneth Kaunda committed to involving the country's traditional royalty in UNIP, building a solid base of support for his efforts to modernize the country among those most likely to resist change. As a young, educated chieftainess who had supported the independence movement since her

student days, Nkomeshya became a close ally of Kaunda and a permanent presence in the UNIP government as an elected member of parliament. She said:

> You know, just a few years after independence, Zambia was struggling to make sure that it educated so many people to work in the government system. So I was put in a government ministry as a civil servant. I worked from 1966, in the government ministry, up to 1971. After the demise of my uncle . . . I was dragged out from my government office to come and take over this throne in 1971. . . . I was twenty-six when I was put on the throne. It was difficult for me to accept, and to understand the roles of a chief. Ah, I struggled. I didn't want to be [chief] because I felt [that in] my future as a civil servant I could actually advance myself more in terms of education. At that time, I was on the list of the people to be sent abroad for further education. But then my services were curtailed in order to take up this position I'm holding up to today.

I tried to steer the conversation to women's issues and her recollections of the UN conferences that she had attended in 1975 and 1985, but I mostly listened to Nkomeshya as she discussed the history of postindependence Zambia and the synergies between Zambian Humanism and traditional African cultures. She explained that the colonists had brought selfishness and private property to Africa. She told me that the socialist ideals of cooperation, as embedded in Kaunda's philosophy of Humanism, were a better cultural fit with traditional African life than the competitiveness embedded in capitalism. In her opinion, Zambia's philosophy of African humanism had brought it closer to the Eastern Bloc:

> You are aware that Zambia during that Second Republic—they were pursuing a policy of nonaligned, and a socialist policy. So they were very much inclined to the socialist countries, the Eastern Europe[an] and other countries, Russia and other countries there. And there were a lot of connections. Maybe Zambia feared, I don't know, with countries like your countries—very rich people, powerful people. So the issue for capitalism was scary to Zambia. They didn't want to go that way. They wanted to go a much cheaper way, to accommodate everybody, under a philosophy called Humanism that put human being[s]—man—at the center of all activities. And that was the policy which was adopted in this country. So those in Russia,

> Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia . . . those were the allies of Zambia at that time. So even working closely with the women activities of those countries, I think that is where Zambian Women's League concentrated much. It was easy to interact with them, maybe because [of] the issues, the difficulties they were going through, how they were organizing themselves. That is what Zambia wanted, too. And at that time, these countries in the Eastern Europe, they offered *many* places—scholarships—to women of this country, to equip them with skills. You know, we had just come from independence, and our education system was difficult at that time. So many of our women cadres, they were sent to be trained in various skills of life.

Her memories of contacts with the Eastern Bloc confirmed what I had found in the UNIP archives. I asked her whether these alliances had been important during the UNITED NATIONS Decade for Women. As a prominent woman in the UNIP government, Nkomeshya told me that she attended the NGO Tribune in Mexico City as a representative of Zambia but helped with the work of the official delegation. What she remembered most clearly from Mexico was that Mozambique got its national independence on June 25, 1975, right in the middle of the conference. Nkomeshya told me that all of the African delegates to the tribune, together with their colleagues at the official conference, organized a party to celebrate the defeat of the Portuguese colonialists and their Western supporters. It was a jubilant event that brought together the African women with other representatives from the developing countries.

The women from the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe were invited to celebrate with the Africans because they knew that the Soviet Union and its allies had supported the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). Given that the UN conference took place after the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile and during the worldwide mobilizations against the war in Vietnam, Nkomeshya recalled pervasive anti-American sentiment. She also remembered the affinities between the women from Africa and from the Eastern Bloc, who found common ground in their condemnation of the continued economic imperialism and neocolonialism perpetuated by the capitalist countries—especially the United States, the Goliath who had just been slain by a small Vietnamese David. From the Zambian perspective, there was no question that US foreign policy was anathema to their socialist and Humanist plans for economic development. Women such as Nkomeshya, with her long career in public service,

believed that women needed a stable and strong state to guarantee their rights and support their roles as mothers and workers. Even more important, Nkomeshya believed that the UN conferences on women would give Zambia's women a voice in international politics, a voice with which she could criticize capitalism and champion black African self-determination.

Backstory on the First World Conference of Women in Mexico City

Before we delve into the specific events of IWY, it is worth remembering the political context that gave birth to the first UN conference in Mexico City. The most detailed account of the events leading up to the conference can be found in Jocelyn Olcott's 2017 book on IWY, so I will provide only a brief summary here.[4] In 1969, the WIDF was granted consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), reflecting the increasing influence of the newly independent countries at the United Nations. As early as 1972, the WIDF began advocating for the designation of 1975 as International Women's Year.[5] Although a delegate from Romania officially proposed the idea of having a world conference,[6] Tatiana Nikolaeva, the Soviet representative to the CSW, initially opposed the conference and mobilized the other women from socialist countries on the Commission to filibuster the resolution. After long discussions and debates, the Soviets abstained from the ECOSOC vote, which allowed the official UNITED NATIONS conference to go forward. Speculating on the Soviets' early reticence, Leticia Shahani believed that they opposed the conference because having an international meeting on women would weaken their ideological monopoly on women's issues, and they would "lose a powerful tool of control and propaganda."[7] But it is possible that the Soviets opposed the UN conference because the WIDF was already planning a huge World Congress of Women in 1975 in East Berlin. Similarly, the US State Department was initially opposed to the UN conference, but, according to Mildred Persinger, one of the organizers of the NGO Tribune in Mexico City, it was the unwillingness of some American liberal feminists to travel to East Germany that helped secure US government funding for the meeting as a way to combat Soviet dominance on women's issues.[8] Thus, from the very beginning, the IWY conference was deeply embroiled in Cold War politics.

The declaration of IWY created new urgency and interest around women's issues, and gave the Eastern Bloc countries an incentive to coordinate

their efforts and forge strategic alliances with progressive women from the developing world. Although the themes of IWY—equality, development, and peace—were supposed to correspond to the interests of the capitalist countries, developing countries, and state socialist countries, respectively, the archival record shows that the socialist countries were as active in preparing for discussion about equality and development as about peace.[9] Although they claimed to have achieved equality for themselves, they understood that women in the developing world needed support in this area, and the socialists were happy to oblige as long as equality was firmly linked to larger issues of social justice. Indeed, from April 30 to May 5, 1972, representatives of women's organizations from around the world had assembled in Bulgaria to discuss their plans for the crucial years leading up to IWY, and all three themes were clearly on their agenda.[10]

But logistical problems plagued the organization of the conference. The first issue was where it would be held. Few countries offered to host the global women's conference, and it is doubtful that the United States would have funded a conference in a communist or communist-allied country. Initially, the conference was to be held in Colombia, but that plan fell through. In the end, President Luis Echeverría of Mexico stepped up and offered to play host. Despite their initial reticence, the Soviets actively participated in the preparations for the conference once all parties agreed on Mexico for the venue. Two separate preparatory committees were set up to coordinate the NGO Tribune, one in New York and one in Geneva, with the United States dominating the former and the Soviets influencing the latter.[11]

Irene Tinker has complained that the planning phase for the UN conference was "abysmally short" and that "neither the UN bureaucracy nor most member countries were enthusiastic about the conference, but they were pressured by women's organizations and supportive NGOs."[12] This initial lack of enthusiasm is echoed in an address to a preparatory meeting held in Tihany, Hungary, in 1974. There, Helvi Sipilä, assistant secretary-general for social development and humanitarian affairs, openly credited the work of the WIDF in making IWY a reality:

> This moment brings me back to 1972 and the days in February in Geneva, when the late president of the Women's International Democratic Federation and my countrywoman, Hertta Kuusinen, very actively promoted the idea of having an international women's year. She had meetings with each regional group, she tried to convince

> everyone of its importance, and finally the resolution, which had not had very great support in the beginning, was adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women. It was adopted by the Economic and Social Council and it was adopted by the General Assembly the same autumn, and I must say, not with very great enthusiasm. When I look at the enthusiasm which it receives now everywhere in the world, two years after that time, it certainly was a very timely resolution. When I came here, I came directly from the General Assembly where the Third Committee has been dealing with the report of the Commission on the Status of Women for almost two weeks. The great enthusiasm we have seen there was quite unexpected, 53 speaking about International Women's Year and the United Nations Conference.[13]

From the outset, the US government—particularly the National Security Council (NSC)—worried about the sudden eagerness with which the Eastern Bloc countries prepared for the conference. Internal communiqués exchanged between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and the NSC regarding the possible attendance of First Lady Betty Ford demonstrate the Americans' concerns regarding the conference. In a declassified memorandum to Kissinger dated May 16, 1975, the NSC strongly opposed sending the First Lady to Mexico, specifically for fear of Cold War politics: "It has been our experience with recent international meetings in Mexico that the Soviets and Cubans have been given free rein to influence events usually leading to anti-American speeches and resolutions."[14]

For her part, Betty Ford wanted to attend the meetings, and both Nancy Kissinger and Leah Rabin, the wife of Israel's prime minister, felt strongly that it would be an embarrassment for the United States if she did not travel to Mexico.[15] In a follow-up memo, an NSC official admitted that there were strong "domestic considerations" to take into account. The NSC must have known that American women's activists would be furious if the United States did not send a prominent person to deliver the opening address to the formal conference, and their memorandum lists the other high-profile women who would attend, including the Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova.

Although the NSC recognized that the international community would question America's commitment to women's issues if Betty Ford did not go, it considered the threat of Soviet and Cuban politicization graver and continued its opposition to her attendance. Kissinger apparently concurred

with the NSC, and in the end, Betty Ford stayed home. Daniel Parker, then the head of the US Agency for International Development, was appointed to lead the US delegation. It was only after American women protested against having a man in charge of the official delegation to the first International Women's Conference that the government agreed to send Patricia Hutar, a Republican political activist, as a co-head. Male bureaucrats in the NSC overrode Betty Ford's personal wishes and the hopes of prominent women such as Leah Rabin and Nancy Kissinger.

Meanwhile, in Bulgaria, in a special decision—Decree 1 of January 3, 1975—the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria formed a National Initiative Committee for IWY and approved a wide variety of measures to promote the domestic experiences of Bulgarian women as an international model, particularly for women in the developing world.[16] The president of the National Initiative Committee was Zhivko Zhivkov, a member of the Politburo and the deputy prime minister of Bulgaria, and Elena Lagadinova and Krastina Tchomakova were appointed as two of three vice-presidents. The decision called on all unions, professional associations, ministries, and mass organizations to support the efforts of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) during the IWY, particularly in its preparations for the UN meeting in Mexico City and the WIDF's seventh World Congress of Women, to be held in East Berlin in October. A massive foreign public relations campaign was planned to tout the achievements of Bulgarian women and the superiority of the socialist system in dealing with women's issues. A special pool of funds was also created to support the sending and receiving of delegations related to IWY. In 2010, the ninety-year-old Tchomakova explained to me, "We [the CBWM] were very lucky for this International Women's Year. Before that, we did our work alone. But afterwards, [the Politburo] supported our work in a new way."[17]

The first bold move of the National Initiative Committee was to invite the Finnish lawyer Helvi Sipilä to Bulgaria so she could witness the country's achievements for women firsthand. She was the highest-ranking woman in the UN at the time and the secretary-general of IWY. According to a CBWM report on its international "propaganda activities," the committee was extremely pleased that Sipilä accepted their invitation.[18] Apparently, Sipilä was considered hostile to the Eastern Bloc, and the fact that she came to Bulgaria twice during IWY was considered a public relations coup. They claimed that it was one of "her first direct encounters with the socialist system,"[19] and the CBWM's internal report stated that

FIGURE 6.2 Helvi Sipilä (front center left) in Bulgaria with Todor Zhivkov (front center right), Elena Lagadinova (back center) and other international women's activists, 1975.

Sipilä was subsequently heard making reference to Bulgaria's progressive maternity leave policies in India and "several African countries."[20] If nothing else, Sipilä certainly learned that the Bulgarians were taking IWY very seriously and that their government was publicly committed to improving the situation of women.

As preparations for IWY proceeded apace, the CBWM also sent a delegation to the Afro-Asian Symposium on Social Development of Women in Alexandria, Egypt, on March 8–10, 1975.[21] This conference, organized by the socialist-leaning Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), brought together the heads of women's movements and organizations across the Asian and African continents, including representatives from Zambia. Almost all the Eastern Bloc countries sent delegations to share their experiences and promote socialism as the ideal economic system to achieve development and national independence for women and men in Africa and Asia.[22] Occurring as it did just months before the Mexico City conference, it is important to note that the socialist countries emphasized that women's issues had to be linked to the larger political issues of the

day and supported the African and Asian delegates in their demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO).[23]

Two months later, on May 12–17, the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers held its world congress in Varna, Bulgaria, under the theme "Women in 1975 and Their Equality—Balance and Prospects."[24] The conference brought together women from twenty-four countries in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, including Sipilä. For other women from the West, the conference in Bulgaria was also their first visit to a socialist country. In her memoirs, the Italian lawyer Teresa Assensio Brugiatelli recalls being impressed by the Bulgarian women, particularly Svetla Daskalova, the Bulgarian minister of justice (who would be a member of the official delegation in Mexico City).[25] According to Brugiatelli, the Bulgarians took every occasion to promote the gains that women had made under socialism in their country and to talk about the importance of supporting women in their dual roles as mothers and workers. At least in terms of legal equalities, the Bulgarians had much to boast about, particularly compared with southern European countries such as Italy.

By 1975, a variety of Bulgarian laws guaranteed equality between men and women in all spheres of life, and the Zhivkov Constitution of 1971 was one of the most progressive socialist constitutions regarding women's rights, elevating maternity leave to a constitutional principle.[26] The state guaranteed working women a fully paid pregnancy leave of 120 days before and after the birth of the first child (150 for the second and 180 for the third), as well as six more months of leave paid at the national minimum wage (seven months for the second child and eight months for the third). Women were also allowed to take unpaid leave until their child reached age three, when a kindergarten space would be made available. The state credited labor service years toward a woman's pension, and all enterprises had to hold a woman's position until her return.[27]

In the run-up to the UN conference, the Bulgarians launched a public relations campaign to popularize these new maternity supports. According to CBWM records, the committee had overseen the production of 560,000 copies of ten different brochures in French, English, Spanish, Russian, and German, as well as an additional 200,000 copies of an Arabic brochure titled "Women in Contemporary Bulgaria."[28] These materials were sent to libraries, diplomatic missions, and women's organizations around the globe and would be widely distributed in Mexico City as an example for other nations. Although there were still problems in Bulgaria—the double burden, the growing feminization of certain professions, and the continuing

lack of women in high political positions—the CBWM acknowledged these problems rather than trying to cover them up. Lagadinova believed that social change would take time, but it was her personal conviction that the socialist state in Bulgaria was doing more than most countries to improve women's lives. It was with these convictions, and the recently passed maternity leave policies in place, that the Bulgarian delegation would arrive for the first UN conference in Mexico City.

7. Historic Gatherings in Mexico and the German Democratic Republic

By all accounts, the conference to celebrate the International Year of Women (IWY) was a watershed moment in the history of global feminisms. Although the world's progressive women had been meeting regularly since 1945, and the WIDF would celebrate its thirtieth anniversary in East Berlin in October, the UN conference in the summer of 1975 was the first time that governments were compelled to send official delegations to discuss the status of women in their countries. The UN conference meant that sovereign states would commit themselves to improving the lives of women, and it was the first time that women in different nations could compare their legal, social, economic, and political equality with that of other women around the globe.

Between June 23 and July 4, the formal meetings of the First World Conference on Women took place, with more than two thousand men and women representing their countries as part of official delegations. Of the 133 member nations of the UN in 1975, 125 sent governmental delegations to the conference,[1] and more than four thousand women attended the parallel NGO Tribune, including some American women who openly disagreed with the liberal and "responsible" feminism of the official delegation, such as the lawyer and civil rights activist Florynce Kennedy. Remarkably, 73 percent of the members of the official delegations were women,[2] including Arvonne Fraser from the United States; Chieftainess Nkomeshya from Zambia (who attended the NGO Tribune but worked closely with the official delegation); and Elena Lagadinova, Krastina Tchomakova, and Maria Dinkova from Bulgaria. Of course, in all cases women sent to the official meetings represented their governments and thus were

FIGURE 7.1
Vilma Espín de Castro, 1976.

directed by the policies of male politicians back home. This held true for all women at the conference, no matter whether they came from the First, Second, or Third World. According to Fraser, "Individual people didn't speak at these conferences, governments spoke."[3] In my interview with Fraser in 2005, she recalled that the US State Department strictly forbade the U.S. delegation to speak to delegates from the socialist countries, even informally in the hallways.

The socialist countries sent prominent women to head their official delegations. The Soviet Union appointed Valentina Tereshkova to lead their delegation, and she was a powerful embodiment of socialism's commitment to women's equality. Elena Lagadinova led the Bulgarian delegation and was flanked by two other Bulgarian women leaders: Minister of Justice Svetla Daskalova and Minister of Culture Lyudmila Zhivkova. Vilma Espín de Castro, the wife of Raúl Castro, led the Cuban delegation and

passionately told the women in Mexico City, "We have already obtained for our women everything that the conference is asking for. Women are part of the people, and unless you talk about politics, you are never going to change anything."[4]

The parallel NGO Tribune brought together a different set of women with more diverse perspectives than those of the official delegations, but the main event concerned the official delegations and the divergent views their nations had on the purpose of the UN meeting. The key tension was between the rival First World and the Second/Third World visions of what the women's conference should strive to achieve. The issue was whether the conference should be used to discuss only women's issues or to allow women to discuss pressing international issues as women, since the official UN bodies were still dominated by men. The liberal feminists believed the meeting should be a venue to discuss specific topics such as legal barriers, employment discrimination, inequalities in educational attainment, and women's representation in political office. The women from the socialist and developing countries (along with some leftist women in the capitalist countries) argued that the international women's conference should be a forum to allow women to have their say about the same world issues that men debated in the UN (nuclear proliferation, peace in the Middle East, apartheid in South Africa, and so on).[5] The East European delegations (following the official line of the Soviets) asserted that women would have more success in achieving cooperation and peace between nations and therefore focused on the perceived imperialist actions of the United States rather than the problems of achieving legal equality with men (which they at least theoretically already had).

Moreover, the Eastern Bloc representatives and many representatives from the developing world had previously attended the international WIDF women's conferences, which always dealt with larger political issues. The delegations from the Eastern Bloc and the Global South came to Mexico City with prepared speeches based on their understanding of what a women's conference should achieve. An excerpt from the official Zambian address to the Plenary Session captures the heated Cold War context of the day. In her opening statement, Petronella Kawandami, a member of the UNIP Central Committee, made note of current events: "Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate the gallant people of Viet Nam for their heroic success over the forces of superpower colonialism. It is my distinct pleasure also, Mr. President, to pay tribute to the gallant people of Mozambique who attained their Independence only yesterday, June 25, 1975. The

fact that Angola is on its way to independence is a clear indicator that Africa will soon see the day of its total liberation."[6]

In his report back to the UNIP Central Committee, the political officer from the permanent Zambian delegation to the United Nations reflected on the nature of the plenary debates and suggested that it was natural that politics should so thoroughly influence the proceedings:

> The conference served to bring about a new solidarity among women as well as partnership with men. But that solidarity was shaken once when women in the Arab and Israeli delegations failed to agree on their understanding and subsequent interpretations of peace, development, and equality. Conference critics alleged that the whole Conference fabric had been permeated by politics. Some attributed the politicization of the conference to men. However, it is hard to visualize a historic Conference such as the World Conference of the International Women's Year to pass into history apolitically. The very issues under discussion—peace, development, and equality—are emotive concepts politically. This serves to confirm the fact that the political superstructure transcends all human activities in one way or another.[7]

Examples of these disagreements can be found in the debates surrounding the official conference document, the World Plan of Action, and the more contentious Declaration of Mexico. According to Jocelyn Olcott, the 1975 meeting in Mexico City provided many opportunities for "Cold War Conflicts and Cheap Cabaret."[8] Although there were squabbles about the World Plan of Action (which passed unanimously in the end), they were minor compared with the tensions surrounding the "Declaration of Mexico," a document specifically created to get the most controversial items out of the World Plan of Action.[9] The "Declaration of Mexico" encapsulated most of the political aspects of the Second/Third World position on women's issues. In his retrospective introductory remarks about the "Declaration of Mexico," former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali recognized that the document was heavily influenced by the prevailing Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.[10]

Much ink has been spilled on the Mexico City conference, particularly on the unexpectedly virulent anti-American sentiment discussed in the introduction. In 2017, Olcott published one of the most comprehensive accounts of both the official conference and the parallel NGO Tribune to date, that examined in great detail the various conflicts and tensions

that divided women.[11] For most previous chroniclers of the conference, however (including many women who attended), the focus of the discord centered on the use of the word "Zionism" in the "Declaration of Mexico." For the Americans, the Israelis, and their allies, attacks on Zionism were but thin veils for anti-Semitism at the United Nations, especially in the wake of the hostage taking and eventual murder of eleven Israeli coaches and athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. The Black September terrorists demanded the release of Palestinians being held in Israeli jails and the release of the two founders of the Red Army Faction in West Germany. Two years later, after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Palestinians entered Israel from southern Lebanon and took 115 Israelis hostage, once again demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners. After a tense standoff, twenty-five Israelis (including twenty-two children) were murdered in what has become known as the Ma'alot Massacre. The Israelis believed that equating the word "Zionism" with "racism" and "apartheid" in the "Declaration of Mexico" would legitimate further terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians. The US government agreed and would have no part in an official conference document that supported anti-Semitism.

Cold War tensions in Mexico also manifested themselves in the debates surrounding a resolution on Palestinian and Arab women and on forging a consensus about the final contents of the conference proceedings to be included in the official UN report. According to the procedural rules adopted for the conference, the final texts of the World Plan of Action and the "Declaration of Mexico" had to be voted on as a whole. Individual delegations could try to amend the specific paragraphs of the documents, but there was no provision to vote on each paragraph separately. In 1975, the assembled delegates agreed to create two separate documents so that the more controversial provisions could be quarantined in the "Declaration of Mexico." Although both documents were adopted by the United Nations as official products of the 1975 conference, the United States fiercely opposed the "Declaration of Mexico." As it was finally adopted, it included four explicit references to Zionism alongside the words "racism" and "imperialism" in two preambular and two operative paragraphs. But even without these mentions of Zionism, it is doubtful that the US delegation could have voted in favor of the document.

First, operative paragraph 3 contained the sentence, "It is the responsibility of the State to create the necessary facilities so that women may be integrated into society while their children receive adequate care," throwing the full weight of the United Nations behind the idea of state-sponsored child-

care, something that President Richard Nixon had only recently vetoed in the United States.[12] Second, it legitimated revolutionary expropriation of natural resources and private property in operative paragraph 19, saying, "The principle of the full and permanent sovereignty of every State over its natural resources, wealth and all economic activities, and its inalienable right of nationalization as an expression of this sovereignty constitute fundamental prerequisites in the process of economic and social development."[13] Finally, the "Declaration of Mexico" legitimated claims for the NIEO in a wonderful example of a convoluted, eighty-five-word sentence that is the epitome of diplomatic UN-ese: "It is therefore essential to establish and implement with urgency the New International Economic Order, of which the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States constitutes a basic element, founded on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest, co-operation among all States irrespective of their social and economic systems, on the principles of peaceful coexistence and on the promotion by the entire international community of economic and social progress of all countries, especially developing countries, and on the progress of States comprising the international community."[14]

Yet it was not only the "Declaration of Mexico" that isolated the US delegation. There were uncomfortable resolutions titled "The Status of Women in South Africa, Namibia, and Southern Rhodesia" (Resolution 4), "Aid to the Viet-Namese People" (Resolution 33), and "The Situation of Women in Chile" (Resolution 34), which the US delegation had to endure, despite its own recent foreign policy entanglements. Resolution 4 was adopted without a vote, and the United States tellingly abstained from voting on Resolutions 33 and 34, despite the widespread support for them. There was also Resolution 32, "Palestinian and Arab Women," which condemned Israel's treatment of women and children in the Occupied Territories. The word "Zionism" did appear once in this resolution, which compelled the United States and Israel to vote against it. But Resolution 32 passed with a vote of sixty-six in favor, three opposed, and thirty-five abstentions (with the delegate from the Netherlands mistakenly casting his vote in opposition rather than abstaining, as he intended to do).

One of the most fascinating stories I heard about the official conference in Mexico City regarded the tensions between the Chinese and the Soviet Union, which manifested themselves in debates about the World Plan of Action and the contents of the official conference proceedings. With respect to the World Plan of Action, the Chinese tried to insert language that would include the term "super-Power hegemonism" alongside the

words "imperialism," "colonialism," "neocolonialism," "racism," and "apartheid" (but significantly, not "Zionism"). For the Chinese and their Albanian allies, women could not be emancipated without the eradication of all of these evils.[15] Later, when the delegates were debating the contents of chapter 4 of the report, "Summary of the General Debate," the Chinese tried to insert the following text: "Two speakers stated that the super-Powers were contending for world hegemony, the factors for war were increasing and the women of the whole world should be vigilant against the intensified arms expansion and war preparations under the guise of détente and disarmament, the purpose of which was really to infiltrate, control, and threaten the independence, security and basic rights of people in many countries."[16]

Lagadinova explained to me that the Chinese delegation's move caused an uproar among the Eastern Bloc delegates. As the head of her delegation, Valentina Tereshkova had to find a way to block the insertion of text that was clearly a criticism aimed at the foreign policy of both the United States and the Soviet Union. But the Soviets had come unprepared, and apparently no one in their delegation had a good enough grasp of UN procedures to orchestrate preventative measures against the Chinese. Panicked, Tereshkova turned to her Eastern Bloc allies to see whether they had any ideas.

Lagadinova explained to me that the Bulgarians had brought along an expert in UN procedure from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs who quickly devised a strategy. The delegate from the GDR requested a separate vote on the Chinese text. First, the Conference had to vote to decide whether to vote separately on the Chinese text. The socialist countries managed to gather seventeen votes in favor of the separate vote against only eight votes opposed. The rest of the delegates either abstained or did not vote on the issue of voting, but the motion passed. For the vote on the text itself, the Bulgarian expert argued that since the content of the Chinese text was "a matter of substance," they could invoke rule 31 of the rules of procedure, which meant that the Chinese text needed to be approved by a two-thirds majority to be included in the "Summary of the Debate." When the vote was finally taken, the Chinese had twenty-one votes in favor, fourteen votes against, and forty-one abstentions—not enough to reach the two-thirds majority needed. Thanks to the astute manipulation of UN rules, the Chinese text was not included, and Tereshkova was greatly relieved.

Immediately after these procedural machinations, the delegation from

FIGURE 7.2
Elena Lagadinova (right) and Valentina Tereshkova (left).

Cuba proposed an oral amendment suggesting the insertion of the following two sentences:

1 Many speakers made reference to the constant violation of human rights that had taken place in Chile, and requested the immediate cessation of torture, oppression, maltreatment, and repression to which the people of Chile, especially the women, were victim.
2 Many speakers referred in their statements to the role played by the Soviet Union in favour of disarmament and world peace.[17]

The delegation from Chile requested that the Cuban oral amendment be put to vote by roll call, and the amendment was adopted by forty-four votes in favor, three votes opposed (Chile, Nicaragua, Paraguay), and forty-seven abstentions. Confusion ensued, however, when the delegates learned that they had voted on both sentences at the same time, as opposed to voting on each sentence separately. The Chinese delegate was particularly miffed by the Cuban amendment because she had not par-

ticipated in the vote, but stated, for the record, that she was opposed to the second sentence. Thus, praise for Soviet peacemaking efforts made it into the official summary of the debate, and the Eastern Bloc women in the official delegations proved that they could be, to use Arvonne Fraser's words, "a very strong presence" at the United Nations.

Western observers at the conference did not know what to make of the attitude of the communist countries and their representatives. Covering the Mexico City conference for *Foreign Affairs*, the journalist Jennifer Seymour Whittaker noted that overall patterns of Cold War rivalry at the United Nations did not appreciably change just because this conference happened to be about women:

> The conflict between the capitalist and developing countries, as well as their own solidarity with the developing world, is the major preoccupation of the communist countries at the United Nations these days—and the subject of women did not alter this pattern. For a variety of reasons, the Soviets displayed an attitude toward women's issues which seemed to fluctuate between indifference and impatience. At the press conference, the popular head of their delegation, cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, called such questions "secondary issues," asserting that although a minority at the conference insisted on taking up much time with these questions, the majority were interested in concentrating on imperialism, apartheid, racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism.[18]

The Eastern Bloc countries considered the Mexico conference a great success. According to the historian Celia Donert, who analyzed the reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party in the GDR, the East Germans considered the World Plan of Action a massive victory for the diplomacy of the state socialist countries, claiming that it was the first UN document to link the "basic rights of people, men and women, to peace, international security, peaceful co-existence, anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and national liberation."[19] Similarly, the East German Foreign Ministry reveled in the adoption of the "Declaration of Mexico," recognizing that its passage was the direct result of intense cooperation between the Second World and Third World countries. Thanks to the collaboration of the Group of 77 countries with those of the socialist bloc, the East Germans believed, the Western countries were prevented from separating women's issues from their larger social, political, and economic contexts. In my interview with her in 2005, Ar-

vonne Fraser recalled, "Nobody would have admitted it, and it definitely would not be said by anybody from the US delegation, but it certainly did seem that women had at least more legal equality in the socialist bloc."[20]

For the women in the CBWM, the most important lesson of IWY was the realization that Bulgaria could become a world leader in terms of women's issues. Maria Dinkova, a CBWM member of the official delegation, was appointed to the working committee drafting the World Plan of Action. In 2011, she claimed that Bulgaria's experience with the fight for maternity leaves had an important influence on the official conference document because "at that time, Bulgaria was far ahead of most nations concerning women's legal equality and state support for women as both mothers and workers."[21]

In the same interview, I asked about her specific memories of the conference in Mexico City in 1975. Did she have any contact with American women or any impressions about them? While she did not directly interact with American women, she did remember hearing that the Americans were proud that women were now being admitted to famous universities such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. Dinkova told me that she had heard the claims that America's best universities were reserved for men, but the idea seemed so preposterous to her that she thought the rumor was a piece of Soviet propaganda against the United States. When she learned in Mexico City that Harvard and Yale had only begun to admit women within the previous five years and that Columbia University was still all-male, she was astonished. "How could such a rich and powerful country still treat its women like this?" she said. It was only in Mexico City that Dinkova understood for the first time how much more the socialist countries had done for their women.

World Congress of Women in East Berlin

While much has been written about Mexico City, it was not the only significant international event of the IWY. After Mexico City, the Bulgarian delegation returned home with a renewed sense of the important work they were doing for women in their own country, as well as their significance as an international example of the superiority of the socialist system. They also understood that the Soviet Women's Committee was happy to let the Bulgarians take the lead on international women's organizing. Almost without missing a beat, the CBWM dove into the preparations for an international women's seminar to be held in Sofia on Septem-

FIGURE 7.3 The Woman in Contemporary Society Seminar, in Sofia, Bulgaria, 1975.

ber 3–6.[22] The CBWM had planned to hold the seminar before Mexico City to build solidarity between socialist-leaning countries in preparation for the UN conference.[23] But it had to be postponed, and the name of the seminar was changed from "Woman and Socialism" to "The Woman in Contemporary Society." The CBWM also invited representatives from a much broader spectrum of countries than originally planned. The foreign delegations included women from Afghanistan, Algeria, Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Cyprus, Vietnam, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, GDR, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, North Korea, Lebanon, Mongolia, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, USSR and Yugoslavia, as well as a special delegation from the WIDF.[24] Hoping to build on the momentum of Mexico City, the Bulgarians promoted this meeting as a precursor to the World Congress of Women, to be held just one month later.

Meanwhile, the Zambians had petitioned the WIDF to host a conference in Lusaka for International Women's Year on the theme "Territories Still under Colonial Rule." They first suggested dates in September and later proposed to hold the conference in October.[25] But the WIDF leadership was engrossed in preparations for the World Congress of Women and told the Zambians that it was too late to try to organize a seminar for IWY.[26] Instead, the WIDF arranged the transport for four Zambian del-

egates to travel to East Berlin, two on plane tickets donated by the Romanians and the Czechoslovaks.[27]

According to Lagadinova, the WIDF's thirtieth-anniversary congress in East Berlin was the most important event of IWY, and by far the most inspiring for her.[28] For five days, October 20–24, more than two thousand men and women from 141 countries descended on East Berlin for the congress, which had been planned by the WIDF with the support of the UN.[29] Helvi Sipilä was in attendance, and, in his official greetings to the conference delegates, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim openly thanked the WIDF for first suggesting the idea to celebrate IWY.[30] According to the WIDF, there were men and women from twenty-nine European, thirty-three Asian, and forty-three African nations, as well as from thirty-three countries in the Americas and Australia and New Zealand.

The work of the congress was divided among nine special committees, with prominent world leaders heading each committee.[31] One of the most important committees of the conference was the Seventh Committee, convened to discuss the subject of "Women and the Struggle for National Independence and World Solidarity." The committee was chaired by Aziz Sherif, the Iraqi vice-president of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization and dealt with some of the troubling political issues of the day, particularly the right of newly independent colonies to choose their own path to economic development without Western interference. In the final report of the Seventh Committee, Sherif concluded, "I would like to stress that the discussion of the issues of national liberation clearly revealed the firm quest of the peoples for freedom and peace. It also underlined the very important role played by the democratic women's movement in the world in this sphere. The work of the [Seventh] Committee enhanced the conviction in the necessity of closing ranks and strengthening the alliance with the socialist countries and the progressive forces."[32]

Although statements such as these were always informed by the realities of superpower rivalry, they confirm the growing solidarity between state socialist and developing nations. In my conversations with the Bulgarian women who attended the World Congress of Women, it was there that they claim to have realized the need for greater connections between the Eastern Bloc and developing countries to resist what they perceived of as American warmongering and imperialism. In 2011, Lagadinova recalled: "[In Berlin] we were all different colors and spoke so many different languages, from so many countries, but we could come together and

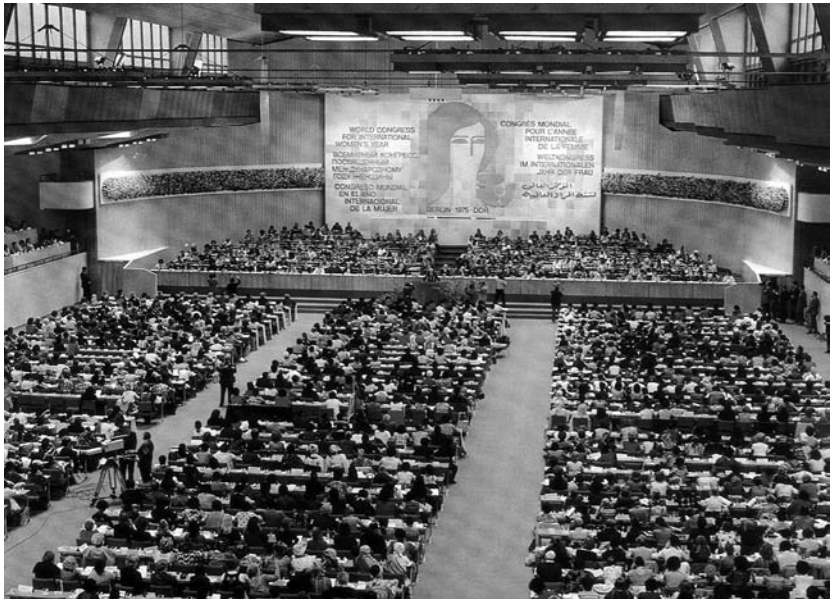

FIGURE 7.4 WIDF's thirtieth-anniversary congress, East Berlin, GDR, 1975.

find solidarity in our common hatred of war, colonialism, and racism. Of course, we all had our political opinions, but we were facing the same problems that women faced all over the world."[33]

As the Bulgarians had done with their seminar "The Woman in Contemporary Society," the East German government agreed to host the conference to showcase the progress it had made in terms of women's rights, particularly compared with the Federal Republic of Germany.[34] Because the WIDF cooperated with the United Nations for the World Congress, the GDR welcomed a wider variety of women from diverse ideological perspectives than it otherwise might have preferred to host, including a representative from Amnesty International.[35] According to Donert, the East German secret police (the Stasi) kept close watch on the World Congress of Women, infiltrating the sessions and social events with a vast force of plainclothes officers. But the five-day event proceeded with no disturbances, despite attempts by Western feminists to organize a protest against the absence of "sexism" and "women's sexuality" in the formal program. The Stasi apparently did not consider the discussion of "sexuality and lesbian love" a serious threat, especially when only thirty-five women showed up.[36] Thus, although there was heavy surveillance, a spirit of in-

ternationalism and cooperation supposedly thrived at the conference, and there were no security "incidents."

Despite the importance of the World Congress of Women in East Berlin to the thousands of men and women who attended the meeting, the WIDF's thirtieth-anniversary conference has been far less prominent in the historiography of International Women's Year.[37] This is particularly ironic, given that the Mexico City conference might not have happened had the Eastern Bloc not already organized its own event in the GDR. But the networks, alliances, and friendships created in both Mexico City and East Berlin would play a key role when the world's women met again five years later, in Copenhagen.

8. Preparing for the Mid-Decade Conference

In the International Women's Year, everything accomplished by socialist Bulgaria, both politically and practically, was recognized, and the UN named [the People's Republic of Bulgaria] a country model in which the issues of women, children, and the family have been resolved in the most progressive and humane manner.—ELENA LAGADINOVA, internal report to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party

Once the UN General Assembly voted to extend the International Year for Women into a Decade, the East European countries redoubled their efforts to promote their ideological perspectives on the international stage. In the case of Bulgaria, the CBWM had the resources available to develop a robust program for international exchanges, and it received unprecedented support for these activities from both the WIDF and the Bulgarian government. Zambian women also took advantage of a wide variety of opportunities for travel to international conferences and exchange visits with fellow nonaligned and socialist-leaning countries, many with the explicit aim of forging strong anti-American alliances in the lead-up to the planned 1980 conference, originally scheduled for Tehran but moved to Copenhagen after the 1979 Iranian revolution.

For a variety of interrelated factors, the Soviet Women's committee deferred to the Cubans and the Bulgarians to spearhead coordinated efforts around international women's issues during the United Nations Decade. First, since the 1963 congress of the WIDF in Moscow (where the Chinese and Albanian delegations accused Soviet women of being imperial-

ists who used the language of "peace" to preserve the colonial status quo), the Soviet women's committee had delegated leadership of the socialist women's movement to the WIDF in East Berlin, preferring to support their efforts with large financial contributions. Second, Valentina Tereshkova, the head of the Soviet committee, was personally more interested in the issue of world peace than she was in issues of equality or development, and although she was a powerful symbol of the socialist commitment to women's emancipation, she chose not to assert herself as a leader of socialist women's organizations after IWY. Instead, she worked with Vilma Espín de Castro in Cuba and with her good friend, Elena Lagadinova, in Bulgaria. The Federation of Cuban Women would help organize and train the women of Latin America, while the CBWM would mobilize the women of Africa and Asia. Finally, both the Cuban and Bulgarian governments seemed particularly willing to invest time and resources to support women's issues.

The CBWM's activism among African and Asian women's organizations also fit in well with Bulgaria's broader foreign policy and its vision of itself as a postcolonial country. Bulgaria had spent the better part of five hundred years under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and compared with other state socialist countries in Eastern Europe, prewar Bulgaria was an underdeveloped agricultural economy. Special pamphlets and books written in English for export to the leaders of newly independent developing countries emphasized Bulgaria's rapid transformation. For instance, a 1978 book on Bulgaria and the Third World discussed Bulgaria's development since 1945: "Indeed, within this small period of time tiny socialist Bulgaria, formerly an agrarian appendage of industrialized Europe, has become a developed industrial and agrarian nation thanks to the selfless work of its people and its close friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries."[1]

This self-presentation of Bulgaria as a small and newly independent country (at least in European terms) gave the Bulgarians a moral platform from which to advocate for socialist ideals in the developing world. Moreover, the radical changes in women's lives in the thirty years since 1945, particularly their incorporation into the formal labor force, massive urbanization, the decrease of the birthrate, and climbing living standards, also made Bulgarian women living examples of the supposed successes of state socialism. Bulgarian women could reference the poor, peasant lifestyles of their own mothers, aunts, and grandmothers and attest to how quickly women's lives could be improved through central planning.

Therefore, the Bulgarian promotion of socialism was as practical as it was theoretical, and Lagadinova and women like her hoped to share their experiences with women in other postcolonial countries. Moreover, the international work of the women's committee fit in nicely with Bulgaria's larger foreign policy interests to build trade relations with the developing world. Throughout the Cold War, the Bulgarian state provided generous agricultural and military aid to many developing countries, aid that became a financial drain on Bulgaria's small economy.[2]

The CBWM chose to focus on Bulgaria's agricultural past in its second major workshop after the conference in Mexico City. In 1976, the CBWM (with the support of the WIDF and UNESCO) held an international conference in Sofia called Women in Agriculture. It brought together twenty-eight national women's organizations, as well as representatives of AAPSO, the Pan-African Women's Organization, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the International Cooperative Alliance. Designed to appeal to agricultural economies in the developing world, half of the seminar was dedicated to meetings in Sofia, and the other half consisted of educational excursions to cooperative farms across the country. Participants were also taken to visit the sites of famous battles for Bulgaria's national independence: Batak and Panagyurishte. In the foreign-language version of *The Woman Today* magazine, (called *The Bulgarian Women,* and published in English, French, German, Spanish, and Esperanto), the CBWM quoted Jane Ngyuena from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe who attended the Bulgarian seminar: "In Batak and Panagyurishte we encountered your country's past and we were greatly moved. Simultaneously we realized why all people whom we met are so hearty—because these people have gone through the same difficult road of the struggle, which we follow."[3]

Although guests were certainly the targets of concerted efforts to make the Bulgarian communist government look good and were rarely apprised of the hardships of daily life under communism for ordinary people, the perceived similarities in the struggle for economic development often created a common purpose between Bulgarian women's activists and their counterparts abroad. Between 1977 and 1978, the CBWM had what it called "experience exchanges" with women's organizations in all of the socialist countries, as well as with those in France, Greece, Iraq, Syria, Tanzania, and Turkey.[4] They also sent delegations to "expand contacts" with women in Algeria, Portugal, and Spain.[5] In early 1977, the CBWM sent representatives to a WIDF regional seminar in Conakry, Guinea, which was attended by governmental and nongovernmental representatives of

thirty-two states in Africa and the Middle East, as well as guest delegations from ten socialist countries. In Conakry, the socialist countries emphasized the importance of peace, development, and national independence for African states emerging from colonial oppression.[6] In March 1978, the CBWM used their own funds to send Nevyana Abadzhieva, a journalist from *Zhenata Dnes*, to Brazzaville to attend the Fourth Congress of the Revolutionary Union of Congolese Women, where she would have met other activist women visiting from across Africa.[7]

In addition to their extensive travel, the CBWM hosted countless delegations between the Mexico and Denmark conferences. In 1977 and 1978, the CBWM received official delegations from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Laos, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Syria, Turkey, the USSR, and West Germany.[8] An account of the CBWM's international expenses from December 1978 shows that they spent 28,000 levs on the line item "expenses for propaganda abroad." The CBWM further spent 17,000 levs sending their own delegations abroad and 14,000 levs on the delegations they received. In addition, they paid a 12,000 lev membership fee to the WIDF and spent 7,000 levs toward the salaries of women working in the WIDF and in the CBWM.[9] Finally, an internal account shows the amount of CBWM funds distributed to women's movements and organizations in other countries, where much of these funds were used to support travel and accommodation for women from the developing world to attend international meetings and conferences, most notably 1975, IWY:

1969	2,295 levs
1970	7,620 levs
1974	1,770 levs
1975	25,520 levs
1977	9,390 levs
1978	12,000 levs[10]

Also in 1977, Lagadinova approached the Organizational Section of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) with the idea of creating a special research desk to study "The Woman in the Contemporary World" within the extant Institute for Contemporary Social Theories. The proposed research program would specifically examine the goals and activities of Western women's movements.[11] Within the context of the UN Decade for Women, Western scholars had suddenly taken an interest in the purported achievements of the state socialist countries regarding the woman question. Lagadinova feared that heightened interest

among Western "representatives of bourgeois philosophy, sociology and propaganda" was disingenuous and conducted "with the clear purpose of misrepresenting and inaccurately depicting the processes occurring in socialist countries."[12] In her letter dated November 5, Lagadinova argued that the Western scholars were researching "everything related to the increasing role of progressive women's movements, [the] sociopolitical and work activity of women in the socialist order, [and] the problems of everyday life and the family" to promote a "completely distorted picture" of the status of women in socialist countries.[13]

As a countermeasure to the increase in Western research on women living under state socialism, Lagadinova proposed that academic resources be dedicated to the study of the branches and objectives of "bourgeois" women's movements and the preparation of thoughtful critiques of their shortcomings vis-à-vis the state socialist countries. The CBWM claimed that it lacked specific information about "female psychology" under capitalism and how capitalist countries proposed to better provide for women's social, political, and economic equality under a free market system. What is fascinating about the request is that although the CBWM asserts that such information would be used to support its "internal and external work" with regard to antibourgeois propaganda, they were asking for access to direct (presumably unfiltered) information about the status and development of Western feminism, of "bourgeois theory and propaganda."

This need for information, however, was important not only for the state socialist countries but also for the developing countries. One revelation of the 1975 conference in Mexico City was that newly independent countries had few experts who understood how to operate within the United Nations bureaucracy. Men dominated international diplomacy, and a key outcome of the First World Conference on Women was the decision to establish a UN training center to teach women how to work within the established corridors of power: the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). As the United Nations deliberated how and where to establish this UN institute, the WIDF, together with the support of the Federation of Cuban Women, established a regional training center in Havana in 1978.[14] Women's activists from all over Latin America received political education in the center, which predated the founding of INSTRAW by five years.[15]

The opening of the regional WIDF training center in Havana provided an opportunity for all of the socialist countries to get together and work out their strategy for the 1980 conference planned in Teheran.[16] In an in-

FIGURE 8.1 Fidel Castro with Elena Lagadinova (on his left) and Valentina Tereshkova (on his right) with other women of the WIDF, Havana, 1978.

ternal memo from Lagadinova to Petar Mladenov (a Politburo member and the minister of foreign affairs) requesting permission for the CBWM's attendance at the Havana meeting and for Bulgaria's continued participation in the UN preparatory committee for the 1980 conference, Lagadinova deployed Cold War considerations to emphasize the importance of the CBWM's continued work in the international women's movement. The memo, dated May 15, 1978, followed the twenty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations in New York, and Lagadinova reported that the Western European countries and the United States were already coordinating their efforts to influence the tenor of the debates at the upcoming conference.[17] Lagadinova explained that the supposed manipulation of the CSW by the Western countries "takes the form of a 'concern' that the conference in Tehran should 'not repeat and not duplicate' the conference in Mexico City," meaning that the Western countries were collaborating to ensure a less political conference and one that focused instead on "key, concrete questions" about women's status.

At the same time, the location of INSTRAW caused considerable political disagreement. The eventual choice of the US-friendly Dominican Republic put the socialist countries on the defensive. They feared that the US would use INSTRAW as a tool to increase their influence over women from the developing countries. To counter this, Lagadinova argued that Bulgaria should maintain a separate training center for African and Asian women:

> Without a doubt, the Western countries will try to use [INSTRAW] as a means of actively influencing the women from these [developing] countries. To steer them away from the path of finding a radical solution to the pressing social issues related to the status of women in society, and from the path leading to the fight for economic and political rights, such as freedom, national independence, and peace. . . . [W]e believe that the creation of a center for training and preparation of women leaders in a socialist country is a very opportune and useful idea. Bulgaria serving as the host would also provide women leaders from both continents [Africa and Asia] a thorough acquaintance with the theory of scientific communism and the rich experience of the socialist countries, and foremost of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, in the resolution of equality and status issues faced by women. Together with the practical introduction to the advantages of real socialism for the development of women, it [the center] could be an active form of permanent socialist influence on the attitudes of the participants in the courses; in this way, the socialist ideals will gain the support of large parts of the populations of countries both with a socialist and an independent orientation in Asia and Africa.[18]

In its efforts to gain permission for the center, Lagadinova insisted that all costs for the courses held in Bulgaria be borne by the CBWM and the WIDF. According to the CBWM's proposal, the course for African and Asian women would "be held annually until 1986, or the last year of the Decade for Women."[19] After that, the CBWM would renegotiate with the WIDF about future courses. Although the CBWM had first proposed the training center in 1970,[20] it was the possibility of increasing Bulgarian influence at the United Nations during the Decade for Women that finally persuaded the leaders of the BCP. Once granted permission, the CBWM threw itself into the preparations for a forty-day training course for representatives from African and Asian women's organizations, the first to be held in 1980.

Another expense borne by the CBWM in the lead-up to Copenhagen was the printing cost for twenty-one thousand copies on "high-quality paper" of a pamphlet on "women and peace."[21] An East German woman wrote the text, and the CBWM arranged to do the translations into English, French, Spanish, and Russian. The CBWM planned to bring these pamphlets to Copenhagen to be distributed at the NGO Forum, printing seven thousand copies in English; three thousand copies in Spanish, Russian, French, and German; and two thousand copies in Bulgarian. The funds came directly out of the CBWM's solidarity budget, derived from subscription revenue from *Zhenata Dnes*.

But the Bulgarians were not the only ones expending resources to influence the outcome of the Second World Conference on Women. Arvonne Fraser recalled that prior to the Copenhagen conference, she was approached by Lloyd Jonnes from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Jonnes served as the USAID representative to the Development Assistance Committee of the Paris-based Office for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC). This committee coordinated Western donor funding (the US, Canada, Australia, and the West European countries) to the developing world, and Fraser convinced Jonnes that the best way to spend USAID dollars to support women in developing countries was to support the United Nations Decade for Women. Fraser became the chair of what was called the Development Assistance Committee Women in Development group (DAC/WID), because the formation of the group was done at the initiative of the United States. Fraser convinced the members of DAC/WID to coordinate their efforts to support Third World women's participation in Denmark, and the group accepted Fraser's idea that "the conference and the forum were an opportunity for women leaders and representatives of women's organizations from developing and industrialized countries to meet, network by exchanging ideas and experiences; and learn how to influence the UN and their own national systems," a goal similar to that being pursued by the socialist countries in Cuba and Bulgaria.

Under Fraser's leadership, the DAC/WID "generated an almost competitive atmosphere among donor countries" to fund women's participation in Copenhagen.[22] According to Fraser, the Nordic countries were particularly generous in supporting the conference and forum, but it was Fraser's connection with Vivian Derryck in the US State Department that paid the most dividends. Derryck helped Fraser get a grant to support conference preparations and enlisted the support of US embassies and consulates

"to select and fund participants from developing countries."[23] The DAC/WID also contacted various women's NGOs in the United States and gave them funds to organize workshops and other forum activities. So while East European countries sent representatives from official state women's organizations, it is important to recognize that Western nations also used state monies to fund participation in the forum of non-governmental organizations. In particular, it is rather unlikely that US diplomats working in overseas missions would select Third World women critical of US foreign policy to go to Denmark.

Jane Jaquette also worked at USAID in the years before Copenhagen and recalls that the WID office "spent its funds on a project I would define as political rather than bureaucratic, namely its support for the UN Mid-Decade Conference on Women."[24] During the spring of 1980, Jaquette recollected that the WID office worked together with a variety of other donors to send "hundreds of women" from developing countries to the NGO Forum in Copenhagen.[25] Writing retrospectively about her years at USAID, Jaquette felt that the funding the WID office gave to support Third World women's attendance at the conferences in Copenhagen and Nairobi were "critical to the progress of the decade." In her view, what she calls the worldwide women's movement only grew because of the monies provided to promote "international grassroots women's goals" by the WID office and "the office's encouragement to other donor agencies and foundations to do the same."[26]

Women in Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP) would ultimately be among the beneficiaries of this increased funding to support Third World women's participation in the conferences and events of the UN Decade. In order to prepare for their international activities, women in the UNIP Party put together their own vision for the future. Within six months of the Mexico City and East Berlin congresses, Chibesa Kankasa convened a group of Lusaka-based colleagues to serve on a new standing committee to create a Zambian program of action for the United Nations Decade for Women. Among the seventeen UNIP members tapped to serve on the committee were Monica Chintu, a member of Parliament, and Her Royal Highness Senior Chieftainess Nkomeshya Mukamambo II, who was both a member of Parliament and the committee's only tribal leader. The report of what became known as the Women's Council of Zambia created a document that slotted Zambian concerns within the three themes of the Decade: equality, development, and peace. As to be expected from a postindependence sub-Saharan African country,

the majority of the Zambian Program of Action focused on development, with five chapters dedicated to that theme, compared with two chapters devoted to equality and only one chapter to discuss peace.

Using the United Nations Program of Action from the Mexico City conference as a guide, the Zambian women, led by Kankasa, distilled the UN document to create a national document that was consistent with UNIP's vision for women. A careful reading of the Zambian Program of Action of 1975–85 reveals both the similarities and differences between the Zambian idea of women's rights and those supported by both Western liberal feminists and Eastern Bloc socialists. For instance, under the theme of development, Kankasa's committee focused on education, economic development, employment, health, and culture. The committee recognized that the "lack of trained leaders has hindered women from full participation in the development of the nation" and suggested that this lack of leadership might be alleviated by organizing "international visits through [the] Women's Council of Zambia."[27] The Women's Council of Zambia also argued for the expansion of nursery schools and crèches to support women's productive labor, stating plainly, "It is the responsibility of the state to create the necessary facilities so that women may be integrated into society while their children receive adequate care,"[28] a position strongly supported by East European countries such as Bulgaria during the Mexico City conference, and embedded in the "Declaration of Mexico." Similarly, paid maternity leaves featured prominently in the section on employment, with the Women's Council of Zambia arguing that "the nation should appreciate that having babies is part and parcel of national duty," and women should not be "victimized for having babies." The suggested solution, however, deviated from East European practice in that the Zambians believed that only married women should be eligible for maternity benefits.[29]

Family planning was also an issue on which the Women's Council of Zambia took a more conservative position than both liberal feminists and women socialists. Kankasa's committee opined, "Zambia is a young nation, and there is plenty of land, so there is no reason why, as a policy, Zambia should practice birth control." Although the council recognized that family planning might result in healthier children, they openly discouraged the use of "foreign methods of family planning," especially contraceptives, because they worried that the availability of such foreign contraceptives had "contributed to the low standards of morals especially among the younger generation."[30] The Women's Council of Zambia also encouraged the return of traditional initiation ceremonies to reinforce

"cultural values" to cut down on the divorce rate, a move that scholars such as Gisela Geisler read as antifeminist.[31] In the same section, however, the council recommended that "fathers . . . spend more time with families and help their children with homework," an idea that certainly challenged the prerogatives of traditional Zambian patriarchy.

In the two chapters dedicated to the equality theme, the Women's Council of Zambia focused on "social equality," which included "excessive beer drinking and its effects," "malnutrition and related evils," "polygamy," "divorce and ill-treatment in marriages," and intermarriages between members of different tribes and races. Kankasa's committee took a pro-temperance stand and discouraged polygamy even while recognizing that it was a traditional part of Zambian culture. In the section on the equality of status, the council spent a lot of time discussing the discrimination against women inherent in customary family law, especially the plight of divorcees and widows, and recommended that a new unified marriage act be formulated and passed as soon as possible. As discussed in chapter 4, the marriage act took many years to become a reality, but the first seeds of the legislation were planted in direct response to the UN Programme of Action adopted in Mexico City. The final chapter on peace focused on national security and emphasized that the "promotion of peace in all spheres of life is also women's role."[32]

An addendum to the report deals with the regulations for the newly renamed UNIP Women's League (UNIP-WL). There are a variety of details about committees and subcommittees and how and when the UNIP-WL would conduct its activities during the UN Decade for Women. Among the various statements emphasizing that the Women's League would work to mobilize women to support the goals of UNIP and the ideals of Zambian Humanism, Kankasa's committee also asserted that the UNIP-WL must establish "more contacts with other women organisations [*sic*] in Africa and other parts of the world."[33] The structure of the UNIP-WL is remarkably similar to the CBWM and other state women's committees.

The Zambian archives provide ample evidence for these increasing connections and collaborations. In the years following the Mexico City conference, the UNIP-WL and the state socialist women's organizations in the Eastern Bloc exchanged many delegations. After 1975, UNIP-WL delegations traveled to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, and the Soviet Union.[34] In the UNIP-WL's archives to which I had access,[35] I also found detailed reports of exchange visits between the UNIP-WL and the Yugoslav Women's Brigade in 1977.[36] These reports

claim that the Zambians learned much from their tour of Yugoslavia and were particularly impressed by the rapid economic development of Yugoslavia after World War II. Indeed, at several places throughout the report, the Zambian authors emphasized that Yugoslavia had been a "backward" country prior to 1945 and expressed incredulity at socialism's ability to transform a country in such a short time. The Zambian report also discussed the status of women in Yugoslavia and the illiteracy rate prior to "liberation," compared with the gains women had made after 1945. During the visit of the Yugoslav delegation to Zambia, Kankasa made a formal speech in which she acknowledged the support of the socialist countries: "I wish you to know and understand that it is gratifying to us in Zambia that throughout all difficulties we have always been supported by all-weather friends from the progressive world, and amongst whom your country Yugoslavia occupies a very important, prominent and distinguished place."[37]

Kankasa traveled to Dar-es-Salaam to coordinate with her Tanzanian counterparts in February 1977, and the Zambians received two women from the Soviet Women's Committee in November 1977.[38] On February 23–24, 1979, Kankasa traveled to the GDR to attend an international conference in East Berlin to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. Although Zambia was still technically nonaligned, it openly identified as a socialist country. In her speech to the congress, Kankasa reflected:

> The fundamental question which Bebel posed was: can any meaningful revolutionary movement succeed without the participation of women? His answer was simply: NO! And throughout his life, he firmly believed that the liberation of women can only come about under a socialist order, where men and women together are liberated from the shackles of exploitation. . . . We in Zambia, Comrade Chairman, are waging a relentless struggle for the establishment of a socialist and humanist society, in which man—and in this term I also include women—is the center of all social policy and action.[39]

Even though many of the delegates had never read Bebel's work, the 1979 GDR conference served as a reminder to the world's women that socialism had been committed to women's emancipation for at least a century. Kankasa told me that she had also never heard of Bebel before 1979 and that the congress had been an important part of her "political education" regarding the socialist position on women's issues.

In the United States, government officials once again worried about the conference scheduled for Copenhagen in July. In advance of the meeting, Acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan exchanged letters about the addition of Palestinian women to the conference agenda. Christopher assured Moynihan that the conference would not be derailed.[40] The House Committee on Foreign Affairs also sent an official letter to Secretary of State Edmund Muskie on May 29 asking him to ensure that the US delegation would oppose any politicized resolutions. The letter stated, "The politicization of international conferences does not serve US interests, nor does it serve the interests of the majority of states participating. In the case of the upcoming Mid-Decade Conference, such politicization would only work against the promotion of the rights of women worldwide."[41] Muskie's office replied to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, assuring them that the members of the US delegation had been instructed to ensure that the conference remained focused on "women's issues" and that they should actively lobby other countries to do the same.[42]

The "women's issues" to be discussed by the US delegation were those seen as being free of any discussion of comparative economic systems or the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and focused narrowly on the specific inequalities between men and women. American feminism was complex and diverse, and many American feminists saw their activism as a part of wider movements for social justice, but the US government insisted that the conference discussions be limited to the topics of equality and sexism, topics that aligned with a liberal feminist agenda—those "responsible feminists." Since 1975, the United Nations had begun collecting sex-disaggregated statistics that revealed many disparities between men and women on a wide range of indicators, and the Americans felt justified in their focus on these disparities, even if they had had the ability to deal with the larger social, political, and economic structures that caused the disparities in the first place. They were supposed to concentrate their efforts on challenging "sexism" and "patriarchy" rather than discussing the problems of capitalism or American foreign policy. As Arvonne Fraser has argued on multiple occasions, the UN conferences were intergovernmental meetings at which delegates had to comply with the foreign policy interests of governments back home.[43]

But the Americans were not the only women constrained by male politicians. In Bulgaria, the CBWM met with several unforeseen obstacles during its preparations for the Second World Conference on Women, mostly

having to do with interference from the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the first place, Lagadinova confided to me that she had hoped that her country would host the Second World Conference on Women in Sofia in 1980 and that (after Mexico City) she had secured the support of Helvi Sipilä, the Finnish UN assistant secretary-general, for Bulgaria's bid. Hosting a major UN conference, however, required the support of politicians in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had their own geopolitical interests and priorities.[44] According to Lagadinova, she was told that Bulgaria had some pending trade arrangement with Iran. Once it became clear that the shah of Iran was lobbying to host the conference in Teheran, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs withdrew support from the CBWM's bid, undoing all of the work that Lagadinova had done.[45]

In the end, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 toppled the shah, and the conference was relocated at the last minute. Lagadinova and the CBWM had been working tirelessly for five years to prepare for the Mid-Decade Conference where international representatives would sign the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an unprecedented UN document advocating for global women's rights. But Lagadinova did not lead the Bulgarian delegation to Copenhagen, although she was the de facto spokeswoman for the state socialist countries. Officially, she told her colleagues and friends that she had taken ill and could not attend the meetings. But in reality, the women of the CBWM needed official permission to represent their country at the UN conference from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the very last moment, the minister of foreign affairs replaced Lagadinova as the head of the Bulgarian delegation with one of his own deputy ministers, Maria Zaharieva.[46] Lagadinova was crushed and humiliated by this decision, but her only option was to complain directly to the Politburo. This would have antagonized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with which she needed to maintain good relations for the sake of her upcoming training seminar for the leaders of African and Asian women's organizations.[47] Like Betty Ford before her, Elena Lagadinova was forced to stay home.

9. The Third Week in July

Despite Elena Lagadinova's conspicuous absence, the state socialist countries formed a powerful alliance with the women from the developing countries and managed to dominate both the official proceedings and the parallel NGO Forum. The Bulgarians and the Zambians co-sponsored several resolutions together with a large group of Second and Third World countries, creating an effective voting bloc in the First and Second Committees (the two bodies where the draft resolutions were debated before being sent to the whole conference for a final vote). At the same time, the Danish organizers in Copenhagen wanted to avoid the creation of a separate conference document like the "Declaration of Mexico" and insisted that all substantive paragraphs be contained in the Programme of Action.[1] In practice, this meant that the Eastern Bloc countries, together with their developing country allies, would try to insert the word "Zionism" into the same paragraphs with words such as "racism" and "imperialism." Seeing this threat, the US House of Representatives and Senate hurriedly passed two resolutions on July 24, 1980, while the official conference was still going on. These resolutions instructed the US delegation in Copenhagen to vote against any document that included references to Zionism and condemned the attempts to politicize what, in their words, should have been an "apolitical meeting."[2]

This politicization of the conference took various forms beyond the contentious issues surrounding the status of Palestinian women, although subsequent Western histories of the Copenhagen conference have chosen to focus on the primacy of the insertion of the word "Zionism" into the Programme of Action because that was the most vexing issue for the

US delegation. In the first place, Zimbabwe had finally achieved national independence in April 1980 after a fifteen-year conflict between the colonial Rhodesian white settler minority and a black, nationalist movement supported by the Eastern Bloc. In Copenhagen, delegates from African countries were united in their outrage at the United States' continued support for the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. Paragraph 173 of the official summary of the First Committee's debate explicitly welcomed "the newly independent state of Zimbabwe as a participant for the first time in a United Nations Conference." It also stated that many delegations agreed that the black women of southern Africa were among "the most oppressed groups," and "the time had come to take concrete and practical measures to alleviate the plight of these women."[3]

If the US delegation worried about the growing bonds between the women of the Eastern Bloc and those in the developing world, they did themselves no favors by voting against draft resolution 11, "Women and Discrimination Based on Race." Although they partially justified their opposition to the draft resolution because the sixth preambular paragraph referred to the "Declaration of Mexico" (which had contained the word "Zionism"), they also tried to introduce an oral amendment removing the first operative paragraph, which reaffirmed "condemnation of all racist regimes and of all countries which co-operate with these regimes, mostly in economic, military, and nuclear fields."[4] When the oral amendment failed, the resolution passed 66–5, with thirty-nine abstentions. Joining the United States in opposition to the draft resolution on racism were West Germany, Israel, the United Kingdom, and Lesotho, although the UN record shows that the delegation from Lesotho had intended to vote in favor of the draft resolution as a whole. When "Women and Discrimination Based on Race" (Resolution 31) came before the whole conference for a final roll-call vote, it passed 78–3, with thirty-nine abstentions. Joining the United States in opposition were only the United Kingdom and West Germany, countries that had strong economic ties with the Republic of South Africa. Even Israel decided to abstain from voting against a resolution that opposed racism.

In the Second Committee, a member of the Bulgarian delegation, Chavdar Kiruanov, was a deputy presiding officer and helped to ensure that the committee concentrated on the paragraphs in the draft Programme of Action dealing with Palestinian women and apartheid. Regarding the draft paragraphs on "Assistance to the Palestinian Women inside and outside the Occupied Territories," the Second Committee conducted a roll-call

vote, which resulted in eight-five votes in favor, three against, and twenty-one abstentions, with the United States joined only by Canada and Israel in opposition. The Second Committee also had a heated debate about apartheid in which "many representatives condemned the apartheid system [and] . . . pointed out that it is obvious that the support of the South African regime by some Western States whose monopolies exploit the great mineral wealth of Africa represents the main obstacle to the struggle for the elimination of the remains of apartheid and racism in South Africa and Namibia. That is why the immediate discontinuation by some Western States of economic, political, military and any other assistance to the South African racist regime is an indispensable and urgent necessity for the elimination of apartheid and racism."[5]

An examination of the voting records on the draft resolutions and on the draft paragraphs for the Programme of Action reveals (perhaps obviously, given the unwillingness of the United States to oppose racism in southern Africa) that Bulgaria and Zambia consistently voted together within the bloc of East European and developing world countries. In the First and Second Committees, Bulgaria and Zambia both sponsored several draft resolutions, including "The Role of Women in the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace" and "Women's Participation in the Strengthening of International Peace and Security and in the Struggle against Colonialism, Racism, Racial Discrimination, Foreign Aggression and Occupation and All Forms of Foreign Domination."[6]

All of these issues made for a hostile atmosphere.[7] In their report back to the State Department, members of the US delegation claimed that officials from the East European countries blatantly flouted UN parliamentary procedures, causing confusion and frustration.[8] More than twenty years later, Arvonne Fraser still recalled that one of the leaders of the Soviet delegation, Tatiana Nikolaeva, was a "formidable force" for her ability to dominate the proceedings.[9] In her recollection of the parallel NGO Forum, Irene Tinker recounted that women who disagreed about political issues were so infuriated that they ended up literally pulling one another's hair.[10] Whenever an Israeli woman took the floor to speak, drummers shouting Muslim songs and slogans in the halls made it impossible to hear her.[11]

Amid the chaos and controversy, the United States and its allies attempted to insert some of their own agenda into the conference document, and the retrospective report of the US delegation even referred to these ideas as "American feminist concepts."[12] At one point, the Australian delegation tried to include the word "sexism" in the Programme of Action.

The word itself sparked an intense debate on the floor, with many women claiming that sexism did not exist in their countries. The delegation from the Soviet Union went even further to claim that "sexism" was such a foreign concept that there was no word for it in the Russian language (an interesting foreshadowing of the difficulty of translating the word "gender" into East European languages after 1989).[13] In the end, "sexism," both as word and a concept, ended up in a short footnote.[14]

After days of diplomatic wrangling, the Programme of Action came up for a roll-call vote during the final plenary session. Ninety-four nations voted in favor, twenty-two nations abstained, and the United States, Canada, Australia, and Israel opposed. After the final vote, delegations could make official statements explaining their positions. The US delegation justified its negative vote by saying that it had come to the conference "with high hopes and reasonable expectations" to contribute to a Programme of Action that dealt specifically with improving the lives of the world's women, but it "considered it unfortunate and even tragic that those intentions had not been fulfilled and that at the Conference the dynamism of the Programme of Action had been all but lost in the din of political polemics in which women's true interest in political affairs had been ignored."[15]

The Canadian delegation made a spirited defense of its "no" vote, claiming that the primary purpose of the conference had been to deal with the inequalities between men and women and that some delegations preferred "the comfortable ring of global political platitudes to the unfamiliar and perhaps threatening terrain of sexual inequality."[16] The Canadian delegation also lamented the politicization of the conference: "These results fully merited the negative vote cast by the Canadian delegation to signal its strong disapproval of the mockery and farce which the Conference had made of serious proposals to end women's inequality."[17] The Australians expressed "profound disappointment and regret" that they had had to vote against the Programme of Action, but they claimed that the Programme "was unacceptable for political reasons."[18]

In explaining its abstention from voting on the Programme of Action, the delegation from Costa Rica worried about the international public opinion of the women's conference and the goals of the UN Decade for Women: "It would be sad if the only conclusion to be drawn from the results of the Conference should be that the women delegates had not shown sufficient maturity to concentrate on the specific and positive themes which should have dominated the Conference. If that was the case,

the Conference would have disappointed the expectations placed in it by world public opinion, which had looked forward to the achievement of benefits for all women without distinction as to race or political opinion."[19]

The abstaining delegation from Switzerland "profoundly regretted the failure of the efforts of conciliation that had been undertaken to save the consensus of the Conference" and "considered it disturbing that so much goodwill had been wasted."[20] Similarly, the delegation from Iceland complained that "the word equality had hardly been mentioned" at the Copenhagen conference and expressed doubt that "women would find it worthwhile to attend a third conference of this kind."[21]

On the other side of the vote, the Albanian delegation argued that "the division of labour between the sexes was not the cause of inequality between men and women; the true cause was the division of society into oppressors and oppressed."[22] Speaking on behalf of the African countries and their allies in the developing and socialist worlds, the delegation from Mozambique said that it was

> very pleased with the outcome of the Conference and the adoption of the [Programme] of Action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women, as it considered that it was impossible to deal with the problems of women in isolation from the political context. In its opinion it was impossible to talk of education, health and employment without at the same time referring to the fundamental cause of oppression from which women suffered, which were notoriously also the fundamental causes of the oppression of peoples. Accordingly, it was right that the Conference had discussed those fundamental causes and that it recommended humanitarian assistance and support for women in their struggle against all forms of exploitation and oppression.[23]

The Eastern Bloc women had much to celebrate with the passage of the Programme of Action. In addition to getting the controversial paragraphs dealing with the situation in the Middle East and in southern Africa that had alienated the Americans included, the women from the socialist countries were able to assert the superiority of communist economic systems in the "Historical Perspective" section of the official conference document:

> In the countries with centrally planned economies a further advancement of women took place in various fields. Women in those coun-

> tries actively participated in social and economic development and in all other fields of public life of their countries, including in the active struggle for peace, disarmament, détente, and international co-operation. A high level of employment, health, education and political participation of women was achieved in countries with centrally planned economies, in which national mechanisms are already in existence with adequate financial allocations and sufficient skilled personnel.[24]

The American delegates, by contrast, fumed that they had had to vote against a UN document promoting women's rights and that so many countries openly disagreed with the Western women's agenda.[25] They clearly considered the conference a victory for the communist countries: "Ironically, it was the nations who believe themselves most committed to women's rights and equality of opportunity who were forced to vote no or abstain on political grounds."[26] After the conference, the Americans worried what would happen to their "leadership" of the international women's movement.[27] They lamented that the US might not be able to continue to participate in the UN Decade for Women or the conference that would mark its final year.[28]

The NGO Forum in Copenhagen

The hostile situation at the official conference was echoed at the parallel NGO Forum, where an unprecedented number of women gathered to discuss issues of importance to them. According to the WIDF report reflecting on the Copenhagen Forum, 8,022 people attended the Forum, representing 180 different organizations or movements from 187 nations, including 245 individual participants from Africa, 147 from the Middle East, 836 from Asia, 357 from Latin America, and 41 from the Caribbean.[29] Despite efforts on both sides of the Iron Curtain to support the attendance of women from the developing world, however, the vast majority of participants at the NGO Forum were from the First and Second World, with 3,347 from Denmark alone (the North Americans numbered 952, and non–Danish Europeans numbered 2,097). Among this multitude of participants there were sixty delegates representing the WIDF and 147 women who were members of national organizations formally affiliated with the WIDF, seventy of which were from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[30]

The atmosphere of the NGO Forum was also charged with interna-

tional tensions. Angered by their lack of perceived influence over the official debates, delegates from the NGO Forum marched to the site of the UN meeting, taking over the floor and demanding that their voices be heard. Anti-Americanism fulminated as both the Eastern Bloc and the developing countries placed the blame for global underdevelopment on the United States and its penchant for propping up racist regimes and military dictatorships. The Mid-Decade Conference had opened the door to unprecedented moral questioning of the US role in global affairs. After the debacle of Copenhagen, the US government withdrew funding from the two UN bodies set up after Mexico City to support women's issues: UNIFEM and INSTRAW.[31]

From the Zambian perspective, the overt tensions and general vulnerability of the American women both at the official governmental conference and at the NGO Forum proved that the developing countries could have power if they stood together at the United Nations. Chibesa Kankasa attended the Copenhagen conference as an official member of the Zambian delegation and signed the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on behalf of her country. During the opening ceremonies of the official conference, more than fifty countries lined up in alphabetical order to sign CEDAW, and, Kankasa recalled, because Zambia was at the end of the alphabet, she had to wait in line behind the delegates from the Soviet Union and the United States. In 2013, she told me that she remembered that the atmosphere was very tense, even though it should have been a celebratory moment. She was very glad to have Sally Mugabe from the newly independent Zimbabwe by her side.

Lily Monze traveled to Copenhagen to attend the NGO Forum but ended up helping out with the work of the official delegation. She remembered the Copenhagen conference as a whirlwind of documents and protestors. "You know, I am good at writing. They asked me to do all of the paperwork. We would sit in a meeting and say 'this is our position . . . ' The worst thing they can give you at a conference is to do the writing, because you miss out on the social [things]." Monze remembered being friendly with Helvi Sipilä and hearing about many protests at the NGO Forum. When she asked her colleagues what the protests were about, someone told her they concerned the wearing of bras. Monze told me she laughed when she heard that American women were saying that "women should be free" from their bras, a sentiment few Zambian women understood or found sympathetic. But Monze spent almost all of her days in Denmark

writing up reports and briefings for the Zambian delegation and had little time to experience the tense political atmosphere.

Spinning a Socialist Triumph

Because Lagadinova could not attend the conference in person, two Bulgarian women affiliated with the CBWM wrote extensive reports about the political and social atmosphere of the NGO Forum. Although these reports are entirely from the Bulgarian perspective, they were written contemporaneously with the Copenhagen meetings and provide a rare glimpse into the Eastern Bloc perceptions of the meetings. Rumiana Gancheva of the CBWM's international affairs section wrote the first report, asserting that the Forum's preparatory committee had been dominated by bourgeois women who wanted to prevent a repeat of the conflicts that occurred at the NGO Tribune in Mexico City. Gancheva reported that the organizers wanted "to depoliticize the discussion, to focus on 'purely women's problems,' to turn [the NGO Forum] into a tribune for propaganda of bourgeois values and attitudes. Such purpose followed an unavoidable, clearly defined political goal: to divert attention from the real reasons for the constantly exacerbating social issues of women both in capitalist countries and in the Third World, to demean and distort what has been accomplished by the socialist countries."[32]

Gancheva also reported that the WIDF was represented at the Forum by fifteen delegates from Africa and the Middle East, eighteen from Europe and North America, fifteen from Latin America, and twelve from Asia. These WIDF participants met every evening to coordinate their activities and to ensure that their WIDF representatives participated in the discussions at all of the panels they determined were important. Their goal was to ensure that the discussion of women's issues was properly contextualized within the greater conditions of inequality that structured women's lives. The WIDF also ran fifteen of its own seminars at the NGO Forum, including a special session titled, "Delegates from Socialist Countries Answer Your Questions." Nine hundred women apparently attended these seminars, supposedly allowing the WIDF delegation to successfully thwart the intentions of the "bourgeois" organizers:

> Thanks to their better organization, mature political mind-set, proactivity, maneuverability, and well expressed feeling of international solidarity, the representatives of the democratic and progressive orga-

> nizations and movements, with a de facto leading role of the WIDF, in essence took over the Forum, set their own tone of the discussion, and thwarted the plan of the organizers. That was most evident in the discussion panels, which became centered on the real reasons for the discrimination against women in capitalist and developing countries (imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, the unjust economic order of the world, racism, apartheid, Zionism). Based on this, it was concluded that, in the middle of the UN Decade for Women, in many parts of the world and in many ways the problems are not only unresolved but are constantly deteriorating, that their resolution requires thorough social and political changes, [and] that the goals of the decade are unattainable without securing peace, détente, disarmament, and international security.[33]

Gancheva also reported that the WIDF delegation was in constant contact with the delegations of the socialist countries, especially those from the USSR, Cuba, the GDR, and Bulgaria, who were most active in helping to draft the sections of the Programme of Action celebrating the achievements of the Eastern Bloc. These four countries, together with Czechoslovakia, also funded almost all of the costs associated with the sixty-woman WIDF delegation, and the GDR paid for a chartered bus and an audio system for the simultaneous interpretation of all of the WIDF seminars. Gancheva took particular care to outline the contributions of the Bulgarians at the Forum who made speeches at eight of the plenaries, writing, "On the issues of political equality, they cited the participation of Bulgarian women in state and social governance; on the issues of education and, more specifically, on the limitations of the right to universal education for women and specific results in PRB [People's Republic of Bulgaria] regarding problems of employment, they cited the experience of PRB in the resolution of problems of the working woman-mother and the condition of the women in agriculture; on the issues of healthcare, they cited the experience of PRB in guaranteeing a universal right to free healthcare, etc."[34]

Gancheva relays that several individuals "attacked" the Bulgarians about the continuing gender segregation of the labor force and the lack of women in high positions in their country, but these attacks were supposedly deflected, and the Bulgarians concentrated on the legal and social protections afforded to women under state socialism. Again, it is important to emphasize that the status of women in Bulgaria was never as

idyllic as the CBWM undoubtedly claimed it was. There was still a strong gendered division of labor within the home, labor segregation in economy, and wage disparities between men and women. Bulgarian women also faced the notorious double burden, despite all of the efforts to socialize childcare and domestic work, and Bulgarian patriarchal traditions held strong, particularly in the rural areas. But the CBWM was fighting these trends on all fronts, and even if the legislation was imperfectly enforced, at least laws existed that could be enforced. In 1980, Bulgaria was one of the only countries in the world in which maternity leave enjoyed a constitutional guarantee. The Bulgarians touted their legal victories at the United Nations, where discussions often centered on national machineries and establishing legal frameworks, and compared themselves with the United States, which had federal mandates for neither childcare nor maternity leave and where the ratification of a constitutional amendment giving American women equal rights had failed (as President Richard Nixon's adviser had predicted).

Gancheva ends her report to Lagadinova with a list of future actions for the CBWM to pursue to capitalize on the momentum created at the Forum, particularly in forging strategic alliances to strengthen "the natural anti-imperialist front between delegates from developing countries and from socialist countries."[35] The suggestions for future action included an increase in the production and distribution of foreign-language publications about the situation of Bulgarian women and families, the development of training courses for the leaders of African and Asian women's movements, and the development of a plan for international exchanges "to increase the bilateral dialogues with women's organizations from the 'Third World' and from progressive and democratic Western women's organizations" who could be "won over as allies" to the socialist vision of the "role and place of women in contemporary society."[36]

A Bulgarian named Veselina Peycheva prepared a second report for Lagadinova. Peycheva was serving as the WIDF's treasurer in 1980, but she referred to herself as the "representative of CBWM in the WIDF's Secretariat." She attended the NGO Forum in Copenhagen as one of the sixty-woman delegation, and her report was much more thorough and detailed than Gancheva's about the daily activities of the Forum and the micropolitical struggles between women from the various ideological camps.[37] Peycheva also reports more specifically about the expenses of the WIDF delegation, and notes that the hotel expenses for all sixty WIDF delegates

in Copenhagen were paid in hard currency through a grant from the Soviet Women's Committee, but the women's section of the Danish Communist Party and the Democratic Union of Danish Women (the national women's organization affiliated with the WIDF in Denmark) organized free housing for the 147 delegates representing national women's organizations affiliated with the WIDF. Thus, many of the women from developing countries attending the NGO Forum in Copenhagen were welcomed as guests in the homes of Danish communists, revealing that, despite general trends to the contrary, the East-West rivalry was always complicated by leftist parties and organizations in North America and Western Europe.[38] In her exhaustive reflections, Peycheva shared Gancheva's perspective that the organizing committee of the NGO Forum had deliberately tried to "depoliticize" the event by focusing narrowly on women's issues outside of their social, political, and economic contexts: "The representatives of the Western countries came to the Forum with the clear intention to contribute to its depoliticizing. They tried to separate the discussion of the problems of women in the contemporary world from the global political problems of our time. . . . The same forces (countries) planned to utilize the Forum for anticommunist propaganda in general and anti-Soviet propaganda in particular. Their end goal was the ratification of a document with pro-Western contents by the Forum. In order to do that, they used a number of feminist organizations from the US, Canada, and Western Europe."[39] Peycheva asserts that the members of the WIDF delegation successfully worked to prevent the depoliticization of the Forum and actively collaborated with many partners beyond those typically included in the WIDF's circle of influence. The women from the socialist countries also aggressively touted the achievements of their own societies, reaching out to and supporting the women from the Global South in their demands for a more just international distribution of wealth:

> The NGO Forum convincingly showed that, in the contemporary world, it is impossible to look at the problems of women separately from the big political problems of our time: the problems regarding peace, détente, and security. With respect to this, there has been a growing political maturity, awareness, and responsibility among many women of different ideological, political, and religious persuasions. . . . The representatives of socialist countries were especially active during the discussions of the issues of development. During the discussions, they deftly described the advantages of socialism as

a social system that provides its female citizens with comprehensive progress, pointing out the accomplishments of socialist countries in the fields of education, employment, and healthcare.

Peycheva reiterated that the WIDF had assigned its delegates to attend certain predetermined events to ensure that WIDF members had a significant presence at all of the most important seminars. She reports that the WIDF delegates from the Third World countries "worked especially well," because they had all taken part in a two-week course in Czechoslovakia designed "with the concrete purpose to get ready for the World Conference and Forum in Copenhagen." In some cases, women from Africa and Asia must have traveled first to Czechoslovakia for their training course, then flown directly to Copenhagen with members of the Union of Czechoslovakian Women. Peycheva reports that the efforts of the socialist countries to coordinate with women from the developing countries allowed the WIDF to dominate the discussions and marginalize the interests of Western liberal feminists, resulting in "accusations that the federation had taken over the Forum and that its machinery works outstandingly well." Even the head organizer of the NGO Forum apparently concluded that, "WIDF is not only the most massive, but also most well organized women's organization in the world."[40]

Official reports from the US delegation substantiate the claims made in the two Bulgarian reports. In the aftermath of the Copenhagen conference, the US delegation would report that conference tensions "reflected the intense conflict between the Group of 77 and the Soviet-Arab bloc on the one hand and the Western nations on the other."[41] The Bulgarians understood that the outcome of the conference grew out of their continued outreach to the women of the developing world. In a report from the CBWM to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Lagadinova explained that "the [Copenhagen] conference and Forum revealed new opportunities for even broader collaboration, on the one hand, between women's organizations from socialist countries and, on the other hand, between our organizations and progressive women's organizations from developing countries."[42] Armed with the information and recommendations contained in Gancheva's and Peycheva's reports, and with the approval of the relevant Bulgarian authorities, Lagadinova lost no time in solidifying these strategic alliances with women from the developing world.

10. School for Solidarity

Following the example of the WIDF center in Havana, the CBWM planned a training workshop for African and Asian women. In September 1980, less than two months after the Copenhagen meeting, the CBWM hosted the first "School for Knowledge, Friendship and Solidarity" in Sofia. This was a joint effort between the WIDF and the CBWM, with both organizations fully funding the travel, accommodation, and entertainment expenses of twenty-one women from Africa and Asia for a forty-day stay in Bulgaria. The CBWM organized the curriculum for the roughly six-week course, which included lectures, seminars, and travel around the country.[1] All of the lectures were simultaneously translated into Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese to representatives of women's organizations from Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, the Philippines, Rwanda, Somalia, the South African Republic, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

This was not a lighthearted exchange, however, but a serious boot camp for women's activists. The national women's organizations affiliated with the WIDF in each of the sending countries were responsible for choosing their most committed activists to attend the course, with the idea that they would return to their home countries and share their knowledge with other women. The course was envisioned as an exercise in "training the trainers," long before this term became popular with Western aid agencies and NGOs. For the first month of their stay, the participants had five hours of lectures for twenty days, in addition to individually tailored one-on-one workshops. The WIDF and CBWM trainers shared practical advice on how

to prepare reports, write speeches, talk to the media, issue press releases and organize conventions on women's issues. The women from Africa and Asia educated the trainers on the unique situations in their respective countries. The idea of the course was also to build solidarity and unity of purpose among women from a wide variety of different postcolonial contexts and to demonstrate the commitment of the socialist countries in supporting the national independence and development aspirations of those recently freed from their Western imperial masters.

In an internal document sent to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the CBWM outlined their proposed syllabus,[2] which included several lectures on the "Tasks of the WIDF," such as "the fight for political, judicial and socioeconomic rights of women (the role of women as working citizens and mothers)" and "the fight for long-lasting peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress." In another unit focused on the status of women living under socialism, three thematic groups were proposed: (1) women and the labor force; (2) women and society; and (3) women and the family. In addition to touting the benefits of state socialism, the seminar leaders concentrated on the specific achievements of Bulgarian women. For instance, in a note about the inclusion of the chosen themes, the CBWM explained to the Central Committee:

> The goal of the thematic groups is to demonstrate the accomplishments of real socialism in the resolution of women's issues. The topics will be decided among the women's organizations and movements of other socialist countries in a way that will allow for the greatest revelation of the advantages acquired by women living in socialist societies. . . . The CBWM will also provide lecturers on the history of the feminist movement in Bulgaria, the structure, functions, and tasks of the CBWM at this time, as well as on a few more general topics that will introduce the participants in the course to the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural development of our country in the years since the victorious socialist revolution.[3]

But while the first set of lectures clearly focused on discussing the accomplishments of actually existing socialism in Bulgaria, a greater amount of time was spent learning about the specific needs of the individual countries from which the women came. There were apparently detailed discussions on the situation of women in each of the countries in Africa and Asia and the particular political, socioeconomic, and cultural problems they faced. Every participant surveyed the challenges and methods necessary

FIGURE 10.1 Elena Lagadinova lecturing, 1980.

not only to form active women's organizations but also how to seek collaboration with different mass organizations. The African and Asian women insisted on the need for strategic alliances with men and men's organizations (e.g., unions) to support the cause of women's equality.

Perhaps even more important were the detailed lectures on the structure and history of the United Nations and the specialized branches dealing with the problems of women and children. It is clear from the proposed lesson plans that several days were spent teaching women about how the United Nations worked and how it could give voice to small, newly independent countries. They included lessons in UN parliamentary procedure, including the basic structure of UN resolutions and amendment procedures, as well as the art of informal caucusing. The idea was to train women from Africa and Asia to better understand the international system so they could pursue their own goals more effectively. The cadres from Asia and Africa were familiarized with the fundamentally democratic nature of the UN General Assembly and how developing countries could band together and outvote the developed countries of the West.[4] Indeed, as became apparent in Mexico and Denmark, the socialist countries—and the WIDF, in particular—viewed the United Nations as

FIGURE 10.2
Course participants in the WIDF-CBWM School for Solidarity, Bulgaria, 1980.

an agent of social justice that could implement the New International Economic Order.

While the Bulgarians and the WIDF targeted countries that were already inclined toward socialism, the inclusion of delegates from Western-leaning countries such as Kenya suggests that the Bulgarians and the WIDF cast a broader net to form lasting international networks. In a passionate address to the participants in the course, Elena Lagadinova explained: "We consider this course an expression of our solidarity to your fights for national independence, female equality, and social progress. But dear friends, let me also express my gratitude to you, the representatives of our fraternal organizations from Asia and Africa, for accepting our invitation and leaving behind your work, home, and your loved ones—perhaps young children, as well—to come here (despite the long distance) and to learn in the name of the cause: to be even more useful to your people and your organizations."[5]

Interspersed with the twenty days of lectures were weekend excursions

to a variety of sites around the country, including attendance at sessions of the World Assembly of Nations for Peace congress happening in Sofia at the same time. In addition to these weekend trips, one full week of travel around Bulgaria was planned to witness firsthand the "wonders" of the socialist system. Of course, it is essential to remember that the 1970s had been very successful for the command economic system in Bulgaria; the seaside was blossoming with brand-new, modern hotel complexes, and urban areas were bursting with new developments. Although Bulgaria did not have the variety of consumer goods that were available in the West, it did have an impressive number of schools, universities, hospitals, cooperatives, and cultural centers that would have been the envy of many women from the developing world. It is also important to point out that Bulgaria was always a "soft socialist" country, with far less of an oppressive state apparatus than countries such as Albania, East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union.[6]

One can get a sense of the responses to the course by reading the opinions of the participants recorded in postcourse surveys and letters. In one letter, Maleka Begum, president of Mahila Parishad, the largest women's organization in Bangladesh, thanked the CBWM for allowing a member of her organization to participate, writing, "We also feel grateful to you for offering us an opportunity to attend the training course for leadership cadres, which we need most. Hope in the next session you will again give us a chance to avail ourselves of this training course. . . . We are sure that you will be happy to learn that Kazi Mometa Hena has come back with great enthusiasm, and we will surely benefit from the experiences that she has gathered under your and the WIDF's joint guidance."[7]

Bea Moore of the African National Congress (ANC) similarly expressed her gratitude:

> I am coming from a movement for national liberation and what I saw here in Bulgaria evokes special sentiments in me. This stay has expanded my knowledge not only about the issues concerning women, but also about their political attitudes. . . . Our stay was not only a time of teaching and learning, but also a time of moral growth. I had never even imagined that a society with such a honed political mind-set could exist. I have become fully convinced that only political development, accompanied by a heightened sense of civic involvement, can lead to a thriving society. That is what I personally saw here in Bulgaria.[8]

FIGURE 10.3 Participants in the WIDF-CBWM course for African leaders, Sofia, 1982.

In a post-seminar survey, another participant, H. R. Svarna of India, wrote, "Bulgarian women have been through a lot but have accomplished their goal: they have won equality and respect. They are not only progressive themselves but are also helpful to others struggling to become progressive. We will take away with us the memory of the warm welcome and courage you inspired in us, the love of so many women that we will not only keep for ourselves but promise to share with others."[9]

Of course, these women were the beneficiaries of forty days of hospitality at the expense of the Bulgarian government and the WIDF, and it is possible that any critical responses to the seminar are lost to the historical record. But the course must have been a success on some level, because the WIDF and the CBWM repeated it in 1982, concentrating on African women. Twenty representatives from sub-Saharan African countries including Angola, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia (represented by the South West African People's Organization), Nigeria, South Africa (represented by the ANC), Tanzania, and Zambia, took part. The design of this course followed the pattern of the first course, with three distinct units. The first discussed the role of the WIDF, national women's organizations, and advocacy at the United Na-

tions system; the second focused on the specific problems of women in African countries and the need to forge strategic alliances with other mass organizations (trade unions, youth groups, and so on); and the third celebrated the achievements of Bulgarian socialism for women and families. After the formal lectures were over, the participants took a one-week tour around Bulgaria, visiting factories and agricultural cooperatives. Regarding this tour, Satiatu Mato of Guinea is reported to have said, "You [Bulgarian women] have perhaps got accustomed to your achievements, but we who look at you from outside can compare what we have and what we have already seen elsewhere, and we must tell you that you have, indeed, achieved a great deal, thanks to your work and to socialism."[10]

When I interviewed her in 2013, Chibesa Kankasa remembered coming into contact with the Bulgarians in Copenhagen and being invited to participate in these courses. Although she did not attend the first Bulgarian seminar, she sent her top deputy, Monica Chintu, one of Zambia's first female politicians; Chintu was a member of Parliament in the first two Zambian Republics and a member of the 1976 Women's Council of Zambia.[11] Kankasa did attend the 1982 seminar and accepted several invitations to visit Bulgaria as part of an official delegation to "exchange experience" with the CBWM in the 1980s.

The training courses offered opportunities for Bulgarian and East European women to learn from their African and Asian counterparts. From a close reading of the syllabi and the comment cards the participants completed, it seems that the organizers from the CBWM and the WIDF used the training courses, particularly the one-on-one sessions, to try to better understand the unique problems and challenges faced by women in the postcolonial world. Although the Bulgarians had a clear sense of the kinds of state policies they considered necessary to guarantee women's legal, social, and economic equality, they tried to be sensitive to the political and cultural obstacles that women in Asia and Africa faced and realized that state socialism could not be a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Although the Bulgarian women, and other trainers with the WIDF, certainly believed that their countries were ahead of those in the developing world, the documents they left behind suggest that they at least tried to treat the African trainees as equals.

For example, there were deep disagreements about a woman's right to control her fertility, with African women suspicious of birth control. While the East Europeans advocated for reproductive rights and family planning, African women largely resisted proposals aimed at limiting pop-

ulation growth. Kankasa and women like her were particularly sensitive to suggestions that Zambian women should have fewer children when the Bulgarians were trying to encourage their women to have more. In general, while African birthrates remained high, birthrates in most of the European state socialist countries continued to plummet. Ana Durcheva remembered many discussions between women from different nations about this disparity in birthrates; she specifically recalled a conversation with a Brazilian women's activist who seemed incredulous that the East European nations were struggling to increase their population, telling Durcheva, "What's the matter? Don't you people have Carnival?"[12]

More important, the WIDF and the CBWM went to great lengths to avoid the impression that the Eastern Bloc countries, and especially the USSR, had imperialist designs on the postcolonial world. Whatever the intention of male leaders, the WIDF and the CBWM stridently supported national self-determination and promoted a vision of global pluralism based on a more just international economic system and a more equitable distribution of wealth within and among nation-states. They heard the critiques of those in the Non-Aligned Movement and carefully presented themselves (in their syllabi and in their publications) as equals in the struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism. Moreover, although they often saw religious institutions as anathema to women's rights, the CBWM and the WIDF learned to accept the important role religion played in the lives of many women in the developing world. Indeed, the course organizers knew well that stereotypes of "godless communists" antagonized many women of faith, and rather than actively agitating against religious beliefs, the CBWM included trips to Bulgaria's Orthodox churches to show how state socialism could coexist with faith (as long as that faith proved no impediment to modernization). The CBWM acknowledged that the socialist program needed to be flexible to accommodate different worldviews.

Finally, encounters with women from the developing world—particularly from Africa—convinced many individual East European activists of the justice of their cause and the moral superiority of state socialism. Most Bulgarian women, including Lagadinova, Durcheva, Rumiana Gancheva, and Veselina Peycheva, understood about the evils of capitalism and imperialism in the abstract. They had read their Marx and Lenin but had little firsthand experience with colonialism and neocolonialism. Meeting and spending time with southern African women living under apartheid or engaged in independence struggles against white settler colonialist regimes in Angola, Namibia, and Rhodesia reinforced socialist women's com-

mitment to the idea that they were on the right side of history. Particularly after the Soviets sent troops to Afghanistan to fight the Islamic mujahedin in December 1979, and the Americans (who were supporting the Afghan insurgents) decried the Soviet Union as an imperialist country that was no better than Britain or Portugal, East European women (who may secretly have doubted the foreign policies of their leaders) could at least find comfort in the fact that their countries were supporting the Africans in their independence struggles. The United States' continued support of South Africa, in particular, played an important role in forging strong links between women in East Europe and the developing world and confirmed to East European women (who were savvy enough to know that they could not always trust their state-run newspapers) that capitalism truly perpetuated both racial inequality and economic injustice.[13] At the same time, women in the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe admired the courage and persistence of their colleagues in the developing world, and at least by the late 1980s, the continued contact between the two groups of women might have inspired East European women to become dissidents in their own countries.

Of course, it would be incorrect to paint international relations between East European and African women as always friendly. Personal interactions between individuals could be strained. For instance, the courses taught in Bulgaria required teams of interpreters who worked for the CBWM. Although Lagadinova and the CBWM members spoke some English, lectures were delivered in Bulgarian with simultaneous translation into Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Russian. Durcheva served as an English interpreter for many African women's delegations. She recalled that some African women had access to goods that were difficult to attain in the Eastern Bloc (jeans, sunglasses, cosmetics, and Western perfume). Since many African delegates were the wives, sisters, or daughters of African leaders, they were also much wealthier than their Bulgarian counterparts. Durcheva and the other interpreters sometimes resented the resources lavished on the African guests, suggesting that they were less committed to socialism than they were to extracting support from the Eastern countries. Durcheva reported one particular incident in which a black South African prisoner wrote a letter of complaint to the WIDF. She claimed that her human rights were being violated because her captors failed to provide her with feminine hygiene products. Durcheva was incredulous, saying: "No Bulgarian woman had even seen a tampon, and here was this woman claiming that tampons were a human right."[14]

For their part, African women who traveled to the Eastern Bloc countries understood that East European women did not have access to Western goods and saw this as a serious shortcoming of the planned economy. They also learned that their possessions were not always safe when they traveled to the Eastern Bloc. Amy Kabwe told me a story about visiting her son while he was studying in the GDR sometime in the early 1980s. She stayed in a hostel where she had a private room but shared toilet and bathing facilities with other guests on her floor. When she checked into the hostel, she remembers being told to call down to the reception desk if she was going to bathe, but not if she was going to use the toilet. At the time she thought this was a strange procedure and mentioned it to a colleague when she returned to Lusaka a week later. Her colleague explained that the hotel staff wanted to know when she would be out of her room for an extended period of time so they could go through her luggage. "You don't take so much time when you use the toilet, but you take longer when you take a bath," Kabwe remembered, shaking her head. "I lost a great many things on that trip."[15]

Then there was the problem of racism, particularly in countries where people of African descent were rarely seen. In her 2015 book, *Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime*, historian Young-sun Hong argues that socialist countries were prone to racism and based their views of the Global South on narratives of "civilizational difference" that produced exploitative relations in a way similar to their capitalist counterparts in the West.[16] Even when they tried to treat African women as equals, the Bulgarian women I interviewed often recalled educational disparities and felt incredulous when their foreign guests lacked a basic understanding of political geography or international politics. Durcheva recalled once translating for an African woman who believed the United States and Vietnam went to war because they shared a common border, leading to an awkward public moment when she had to translate away the mistake and hope she didn't get caught. As much as East European women tried to cultivate a culture of solidarity, stereotypes about African culture must have underpinned personal interactions.

Zambian women, too, may have had mixed feelings about these courses. Anne Namakando-Phiri spent a year at a special school for political education in East Germany. In addition to the cold weather and unfamiliar food, Namakando-Phiri disliked the separation of the African cadres from their German comrades. "It made sense," she explained in an interview in 2013, "because our courses were in English, and theirs were in German.

FIGURE 10.4 Group photo from the WIDF-CBWM course for African leaders, Sofia, 1982.

But it felt like we were being segregated from the Germans." Namakando-Phiri also recalled strolling down a street in Leipzig one day when a small German child asked her why she never took a bath. "She had never seen a black person and thought I was dirty. She was just a child, but this made me feel bad."

Looking back on these training courses after more than three decades, it is hard to document or prove the impact they might have had on both the women who attended them and the women who organized them. Memories fade and the papers preserved in the archives can only tell part of the story. What I do know is that the courses were apparently considered successful enough that the leaders of the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Committee (REWA) came to Bulgaria in April 1983 to learn about setting up their own training center in Addis Ababa, for which the Bulgarians ultimately provided 10,000 levs in financial assistance.[17] The CBWM and REWA entered into a formal agreement in the hope that the new center in Ethiopia would provide future training to cadres from Africa and Asia. Lagadinova and the CBWM continued to cultivate strong relationships with African women throughout the first half of the 1980s, hosting two more Schools for Peace in 1984 and 1985. These connections would become important at the third UN conference in Nairobi, particularly with regard to challenging the supposed leadership of the "American feminists."

The Nairobi conference was imagined as an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the UN Decade for Women and to put together a set of Forward-Looking Strategies to continue the work begun in 1975. But as with Mexico City and Copenhagen, Cold War politics would come to dominate the proceedings in Nairobi, particularly with Ronald Reagan in the White House rattling sabers about the weaponization of space. Superpower rivalry mobilized politicians on both sides of the Iron Curtain to showcase how their societies supported the rights of women.

11. Strategizing for Nairobi

Demands for an International Women's Year in 1975 originated from the pressures of the women's movement in the United States and, to some degree, the United Kingdom and West Germany. . . . At the moment the focus of power in the [international] women's movement seems to be in the United States. Basic economic resources are centered there, with all that follows those, and it is probably possible for U.S. women to dominate the movement to make their goals predominant. —CAROLYN STEPHENSON, "Feminism, Pacifism, Nationalism, and the United Nations Decade for Women"

Despite the perception of some American women that the focus of power of the global women's movement was in the United States and that it would be possible for "U.S. women to dominate the movement to make their goals predominant," women of the Eastern Bloc and the developing countries had very different ideas about who was going to spearhead women's issues at the United Nations. Official preparations for the 1985 conference in Nairobi began at a special session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in 1983.[1] Leticia Shahani, a politician and diplomat from the Philippines who was then the UN assistant secretary-general for social development and humanitarian affairs, was appointed secretary-general for the conference. Nita Barrow from Barbados was to be in charge of the parallel NGO Forum and scheduled a separate preparatory meeting in Vienna in 1984.

After a relative lull in Cold War tensions during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, international animosity exploded during Ronald Reagan's first term in the White House, and geopolitics threatened to undermine the women's conference once again. In the wake of the Iranian Revolution, religious fundamentalism was also on the rise, and new conservative movements across the globe threatened to roll back progress on women's rights. In the United States, right-wing organizations like the Heritage Foundation lobbied to cancel the conference, and the Kenyan government bungled the logistical preparations necessary for hosting an official UN meeting and NGO Forum. Arvonne Fraser has suggested that the Kenyan government's foot dragging and lack of preparation was a deliberate attempt to quell enthusiasm for the conference once it realized the level of interest among African women who were hopeful for greater social, legal, and economic rights.[2]

From the CBWM, Ana Durcheva had been serving as the WIDF treasurer, and the organization of the WIDF's participation in the NGO Forum in Nairobi fell on her shoulders. Durcheva traveled extensively in the lead-up to 1985, attending various preparatory meetings in Algeria, Egypt, and Switzerland, as well as visiting Nairobi in April 1985 to organize accommodations for the 410 participants the WIDF would be sponsoring to attend the Forum. In her reports back to the WIDF secretariat in East Berlin and to Elena Lagadinova in Sofia, Durcheva was remarkably frank about the various challenges she faced in dealing with the politics of the preparations, particularly with regard to the mobilization of the WIDF's African affiliates. Although her archives clearly represent only the documents she chose to preserve, Durcheva's official reports and personal papers provide one fascinating look at the Eastern Bloc perspective on, and preparations for, the 1985 conference, a perspective that has been largely absent from the literature on the UN Decade for Women.

First, Durcheva attended the Council Meeting of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO) in Algeria on December 8–11, 1984.[3] Although the official agenda of the meeting was preparation for the Third World Conference on Women, in Nairobi in 1985, Durcheva noted with some annoyance that twenty-five member countries, including Kenya, were absent from the meeting. Despite this, the forty-nine delegates from the twenty-four countries that did attend did not stop to determine whether they had enough members present for an official quorum. Durcheva reports that observers from the women's organizations of eight nations—Albania, Al-

FIGURE 11.1 Ana Durcheva in her WIDF office, East Berlin, mid-1980s.

geria, Bulgaria, Chile, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Romania, and the Soviet Union—were also in attendance. Although the general tone of the PAWO meeting was strongly anti-imperialist, she noted that the meeting "revealed the lack of experience of many of the WIDF-affiliated national organizations of Africa in seeking the cooperation of the WIDF in the elaboration of documents on a regional level in order to improve the global view on the problems" and "reconfirmed the necessity of further concerted effort on the part of the WIDF to consolidate and expand its cooperation with PAWO in the first instance in the preparation for Nairobi and in general."[4]

Durcheva's report suggests that the WIDF and the representatives of the socialist countries attended the PAWO meeting with the express intention of preparing the official representatives of African women's organizations for their roles in Nairobi. Durcheva had previously met many of these women during the training courses held in Sofia in 1980, 1982, and 1984, and when I interviewed her in 2011 and 2012, she often complained about the lack of commitment of many of the African women sent to represent their countries at international women's meetings (much as the American Gladys Tillet complained in 1966 about her Latin American colleagues). Durcheva understood that the African women's activists

were often family members of African leaders, and not all of them shared her interest in international women's issues. Between 1980 and 1984, the WIDF and the CBWM had invested time and resources in training African women to take up leadership positions in the international women's movement, but the women they trained were not always the women that male African leaders sent to the high-profile UN conferences. In the year preceding the Nairobi conference, Durcheva was frustrated to learn that few leaders of the national women's organizations could draft basic policy documents without direct help from the WIDF.

Evidence of this can be seen in a report dated January 23–24, 1985. In her capacity as a formal representative of the WIDF, Durcheva attended the Second Meeting of the Presidium Committee on Women of Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) at their offices in Cairo. Her report gave a blow-by-blow account of the internal preparations among the AAPSO members for the Nairobi conference and the extensive influence of socialist bloc countries on AAPSO's official reports and statements for Nairobi. The first order of business was the approval of two previously prepared reports. The first was a report of the Permanent Secretariat on the AAPSO activities on the Decade, in particular, the creation of the Presidium Committee on Women at the tenth AAPSO Presidium meeting in Kabul in 1981. The second report was "an analysis of political trends and issues in preparation for the end of the UN Decade for Women," which was prepared by an American woman named Jeanne Woods, a representative of an organization called NAIMSAL (National Anti-Imperialist Movement for Solidarity with African Liberation) in cooperation with the AAPSO permanent representative to the United Nations. Durcheva asserts that: "both reports contained phrases of warm recognition of the role played by the WIDF in the struggle for implementation of the goals of the UN Decade for Women and of the close and efficient co-operation between the two organizations in this respect."[5] These two reports were approved, and the Presidium meeting turned to the necessary preparations for AAPSO's participation in the NGO Forum in Nairobi. For each of the subthemes of the conference, AAPSO needed to prepare a paper or sponsor a workshop, and Durcheva's report records the distribution of responsibilities. The Presidium members, for instance, agreed that the basic papers on employment and education would be prepared by Ethiopia and Congo, respectively, but on the subtheme of "Young women and old women," AAPSO asked the GDR to write its position paper.

Durcheva also reported that the AAPSO Presidium planned to submit a

memorandum to the official intergovernmental conference expressing its positions on the challenges still facing women at the conclusion of the UN Decade. A draft of this report was prepared and submitted for discussion. Durcheva comments that the first draft had "major weaknesses" because it was based only on the official document of the 1975 conference in Mexico City and ignored all of the international documents adopted in the intervening decade, including CEDAW (1979); the Copenhagen Programme of Action (1980); and the UN Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation, which had been adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982. Moreover, Durcheva noted that the draft contained no suggestions for work to be continued after the conclusion of the UN Decade. Her disappointment at the state of the draft is palpable in her report: "While one cannot expect from AAPSO Permanent Secretariat to have that in-depth understanding on all issues relating to the UN Decade for Women, it is regrettable to note that although 50% of the members of the Presidium Committee on Women were activists or even presidents of our affiliated national organizations, they failed to manifest the necessary vigilance in the drawing of such an important document, and made only minor insignificant amendments. . . . I underline the importance of this observation because of its potential significance for our future work in Nairobi and after it."[6]

Durcheva's frustration with her African colleagues might reveal an implicit racial bias, but it is clear that AAPSO's lack of preparation also created a lot of additional work for her. Contained within Durcheva's personal files is a copy of the original draft of the AAPSO memorandum with Durcheva's own, extensive handwritten edits. She also includes a copy of the final AAPSO memorandum submitted to the UN. It is clear that the AAPSO statement to the Nairobi conference was crafted by the WIDF treasurer using some of the language from the report written by Jeanne Woods and with the input of a representative from Finland, Marjut Helsinen. The AAPSO Presidium Committee adopted this edited version of the document unanimously, without further questions or suggestions for changes. The rest of Durcheva's report from the Cairo meeting discusses the requests for WIDF financial assistance to support various national delegations to attend the NGO Forum in Nairobi. Individual women petitioned the WIDF for funds to underwrite the costs of their participation, even those who had taken little interest in preparing the conference documents.

Because the WIDF committed to paying for the travel, accommodations,

and meals for more than four hundred female activists, Durcheva traveled to Nairobi in April 1985 to work out logistical details on the ground. When she arrived, she found that the atmosphere of the two main Kenyan preparatory bodies (the government Secretariat and the NGO Organizing Committee) was "overcharged with a certain suspense and tension." These tensions arose after a failure to reach consensus about the content and form of the conference document at the third preparatory meeting of the CSW in Vienna in March 1985. The United States was threatening to boycott the meeting, and an extraordinary session of the CSW was being held on April 29 in New York City to try to reach a compromise. According to Durcheva's report, Kenyan preparations for the conference were thrown into a state of chaos after the open conflict in Vienna:

> Rumors that the conference might be postponed or cancelled, the overt confrontation between the Group of 77 and the US delegation, and the direct attacks against the Kenyan representatives at the meeting have seriously put out of balance the preparations at the national level, which apparently until that moment had been conducted in a smooth, quiet manner, in full compliance with the instructions of the Western counselors. The results of the Vienna meeting have confronted Kenya with the dilemma of either saving its prestige or succumbing to its economic interests.[7]

Durcheva reported that the Kenyan authorities were "under severe pressure" from the diplomatic personnel at the US and Canadian embassies, who had daily consultations with the two national preparatory bodies in charge of the official conference and the parallel NGO Forum. At every Kenyan meeting about the conference, either the United States or Canada apparently sent a representative to ensure that their views and desires were taken into account. Representatives of the Kenyan government and Eddah Gachukia, the president of the NGO Organizing Committee, confided to Durcheva that the Americans were trying to prevent conference discussions about the situation of women in Palestine or living under South African apartheid, two issues that would haunt the conference later that summer.

Even more galling to Durcheva was the US Embassy's insistence that the Nairobi Hilton be closed and reserved for the needs of the US delegation, its support staff, and other American women traveling to attend the forum. Although the Kenyans resisted this request, Durcheva reported that as of April 1985 the Kenyan government was not dealing with the

looming problem of lack of accommodations, partially because of the Kenyan government's unwillingness to free up funds for the much needed renovations and partially because of recent student unrest that might extend the academic year into the summer (meaning that student dormitories would not be vacant in time for the conference). Durcheva also complained about the lack of a central registry for the Nairobi accommodations and the poor quality of the rooms on offer, with "the overall sanitary conditions being below any standards."[8] After much persistence on Durcheva's part, she found a campus hostel not yet placed on the government's official list of available accommodation and was able to book 410 beds by paying a 30 percent deposit to secure the rooms. In a later document prepared for the university, Durcheva submitted a detailed list of the names of the women from the WIDF-affiliated national and international organizations that would be staying in these rooms.[9]

Durcheva was also responsible for organizing and paying for the transportation to and from the Forum between the university and the Chiromo Campus Hotel, as well as transfers to and from the airport and the $10 airport tax. Durcheva struggled with the logistics of how to feed the more than four hundred women traveling to Nairobi on the WIDF's expense and eventually arranged for meals in the canteen of the Chiromo Campus Hotel. All of these expenses in Kenya required hard currency, and Durcheva later complained that she had to fly from Berlin to Kenya with $30,000 in traveler's checks in a money belt around her waist, constantly fearing that she would be robbed. Realizing the importance of the Nairobi Conference, Durcheva's records show that the WIDF and the CBWM mobilized incredible resources to ensure that the conference dealt with issues affecting the lives of women across the globe, especially that of apartheid. This was an issue of particular concern for women in Zambia and South Africa's other neighboring countries.

Bulgarian-Zambian Bilateral Links

The WIDF's preparations for Nairobi were supplemented by continuing exchanges between state socialist countries and nations in the developing world. The Cubans spearheaded bilateral efforts with the Latin American nations while the Bulgarians concentrated on women's organizations in the Near East and Africa. The years between 1980 and 1985 saw the sending and receiving of many delegations of women between the nations that considered themselves progressive. Similarly, in the United States, leftist

women began to reach out to state socialist women's committee, forging new East-West links. In particular, an organization called Women for Racial and Economic Equality (WREE) was founded in Chicago in 1977 and became an official affiliate of the WIDF.[10] The WREE campaigned tirelessly against apartheid throughout the 1980s, protested the Reagan presidency, and aligned themselves with the Second World and Third World women in the lead-up to Nairobi.

Although there were countless new alliances, breaking down the old divisions between East and West, the CBWM particularly concentrated its efforts on strengthening bilateral ties with African nations, including Zambia. Between 1980 and 1985, the CBWM cultivated its links with the United National Independence Party-Women's League (UNIP-WL), which can be glimpsed through a series of letters between Elena Lagadinova and Chibesa Kankasa.[11] Kankasa, as the mother of ten children, often found it difficult to travel outside of Zambia for extended periods of time, and one of the earliest letters between the two women reiterates an invitation from Lagadinova to Kankasa to visit Bulgaria after Kankasa was unable to make a previously scheduled trip. Lagadinova tells Kankasa that such a trip would "get you acquainted with the achievements of Bulgarian women, with the problems that face us at the present stage and to exchange experience on the problems of interest for the women from both our countries."[12] This same letter confirms that two members of the CBWM would soon be visiting Zambia on an "experience exchange."

In a later letter thanking the Zambians for hosting the Bulgarian representatives, Lagadinova tells Kankasa, "We should like to believe that the exchange of delegations between our two organizations will set the beginning of a durable and useful collaboration, of a sincere friendship between the women of Bulgaria and Zambia, between the Committee of the Movement of Bulgarian Women [CBWM] and the Union of Women in Zambia."[13] The Bulgarians were persistent in reaching out to the Zambians, offering to cover all expenses for their official visits to Bulgaria. In my interviews with Lagadinova in 2011, she said she believed that Bulgarian efforts to reach out to socialist women in Africa were driven by ideals of "solidarity and friendship."[14] She also hoped that Eastern Bloc efforts would pressure the governments of developing countries to expend the resources necessary to create state-sponsored facilities to support women's dual roles as mothers and workers. The CBWM measured its international influence based on the number of official relationships it formed and constantly reported back to the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

about its global ties. Lagadinova invested a great deal of time and energy in maintaining her personal ties with African women's advocates, making her irreplaceable as the head of the Bulgarian delegation. She did not want to risk being replaced, as she had been in Copenhagen.

It was with the idea of creating a national network of public childcare facilities that Kankasa approached Bulgaria's diplomatic mission in Lusaka in 1980 to initiate a dialogue with the CBWM. Kankasa had specifically asked for Bulgarian assistance to set up kindergartens and crèches, requesting that the Bulgarians help the Zambians train teachers for these institutions and send Bulgarian teachers who could work in them in the interim. In 1980, Bulgaria was among the socialist countries with the most extensive networks of childcare facilities, which were linked to each enterprise, factory, and agricultural cooperative. Every detail of the construction of the kindergartens was overseen by the CBWM, from the interior décor to the type and quality of toys. Furthermore, all teachers in the kindergartens were to have specific training in child development psychology and pedagogy.[15] The Zambians said that they hoped to learn from the Bulgarian experience, and the Bulgarians helped the Zambians build kindergartens in urban areas that continued to function long after the Cold War ended.

But childcare was only one of the issues on the minds of Kankasa and the delegation of Zambian women when they traveled to Bulgaria in October 1981 for official meetings with the CBWM. The Zambian women requested Bulgarian assistance with the total "liquidation of illiteracy, ignorance and poverty" in Zambia. They reiterated their request for help with building more kindergartens, but they also asked for assistance with the project of building schools and solving some of Zambia's health problems.[16] Finally, Kankasa expressed great interest in Bulgaria's maternity leave provisions and generally approved of the Bulgarian valorization of motherhood.[17] According to Kankasa, conversations with the Bulgarians inspired the Zambian women to pressure male leaders to ensure the state resources necessary to pay for the staffing of kindergartens. This emphasis on the public provision of services to support Zambian woman as both mothers and workers is at least partially a legacy of their many exchanges with women's organizations in the state socialist countries. Moreover, the personal ties between individual women in the state women's committees would help solidify the ideological alliance between the Second and Third World activists at the final conference of the UN Decade for Women.

12. Showdown in Kenya

The 1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi occurred in a changing geopolitical climate broiling with international tensions and new economic realities. East European economies were stagnating as a renewed arms race threatened the world with total nuclear annihilation, or what was then called MAD (mutually assured destruction). The Reagan administration wanted to weaponize space as Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union and attempted to reform his country from within. The Americans supported death squads in Central America and invaded the small island of Grenada. The Soviets were embroiled in an unpopular occupation of Afghanistan, propping up a weak socialist government against CIA-backed Islamic/jihadist insurgents who would later become the Taliban. In October 1983, Hezbollah terrorists killed 241 American Marines and other members of a UN peacekeeping force stationed in Beirut, heightening tensions in the Middle East. With Reagan in Washington, DC, and Margaret Thatcher in charge of the United Kingdom, waves of privatization, deregulation, and market liberalization dramatically changed the perceived role of the state in guiding the economy and providing social safety nets for its citizens. Third World countries, having borrowed millions in Western development "aid," found themselves wallowing in ever mounting arrears, and many became little more than debt colonies.[1] Anti-American sentiment skyrocketed. Within the United States, domestic activists pressed for economic sanctions and boycotts against South Africa and protested the union-busting, tax-cutting supply-side economics of the Reagan administration.

Anxious to avoid a repeat of the humiliation of the American delegation at the Copenhagen conference, the US government took an active role in preparations for Nairobi, offering to foot the bill of the conference in exchange for influence over the proceedings (which Ana Durcheva had seen clear evidence of in the spring of 1985). The House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations convened a special hearing to discuss the US contribution to the conference and the potential for "politicization." According to the hearing's chair, Gus Yatron, this was only the second time in the entire history of the House of Representatives that it held a special session specifically to address women's issues.[2] In response to a direct question about the conference politics, Nancy Reynolds, the US representative to the UN Commission on the Status of Women replied, "The Eastern Bloc—The Soviet Bloc countries are consistent about trying to disrupt and to go on to other issues which do not concern the Commission, but women in the Commission, I think, want to take a moderate attitude, and they want to see results to help women and not turn it into another political free-for-all."[3] The Reagan administration appointed the president's daughter, Maureen Reagan, and the conservative politician Alan Keyes to head the US delegation to Nairobi.

A provocative letter sent to the president of the conference from the head of the Soviet delegation on July 15 (the first day of the Nairobi conference) intensified Cold War tensions.[4] In the letter, a group of state socialist countries directly accused the United States of undermining the goals of the UN Decade for Women by being an imperialistic and war-mongering nation set on weaponizing space and fueling the nuclear arms race. Three days later, the US delegation responded with its own letter to the conference president, saying, "We sincerely hope the countries of the world are fully aware of the elaborate East Bloc charade. In order to divert attention from their own irrelevancy to the development aspirations of the world, they engage in vicious and false attacks against others. The U.S. will not allow Soviet lies and distortion to go unanswered. We hope others will join us in resisting these activities during this conference in order to foster frank and open discussion of the unique concerns of women."[5]

As reported by Durcheva and confirmed by Irene Tinker, the US government also used its financial support of the Kenyan government to influence the rules governing the adoption of the final conference document: the Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (FLS).[6] Janice Wetzel further demonstrated that the US advised the Ken-

yans to deny visas to potential troublemakers headed to the NGO Forum.[7] To avoid a replay of Copenhagen, the Americans exerted heavy pressure on the Kenyans to ensure that the FLS was adopted by consensus and without a separate document like the "Declaration of Mexico." More important, the FLS were to be voted on paragraph by paragraph, a complete break with the procedures to approve the official conference documents in Mexico and Denmark. Individual governments were allowed to have their reservations about certain paragraphs noted as part of the official document, thus allowing countries with dissenting views to express their disagreement without having to vote against the whole thing.

The US delegation made use of this new provision more than any other nation. Sixteen advanced capitalist countries joined the United States in submitting reservations to paragraph 35 because it referred to the "Declaration of Mexico." The delegation from the Holy See (the Vatican) submitted three official reservations against paragraphs claiming that women had a right to control their own fertility. The United States by itself, however, asked that its reservations be recorded with regard to eleven different paragraphs in the FLS, disagreeing with issues ranging from Palestinian women's rights and economic sanctions on the South African apartheid regime to the concept of "equal pay for work of equal value." Of course, the US delegation believed it was fighting the very real increase in global anti-Semitism in its defense of Israel (particularly after the Iranian Revolution and its support for Hezbollah), but its continued refusal to impose economic sanctions against South Africa (despite growing domestic pressure at home) reflected far less noble goals.

The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women is sprinkled with asterisks noting the specific disagreements of a United States intent on defending its economic interests. Of particular relevance to a conference being held in the Third World in 1985 are paragraphs 94 and 95, in which the countries of the Second and Third Worlds point to the predatory and imperialistic politics of the Reagan-era United States. Paragraph 94 specifically targets the "coercive measures of an economic, political and other nature that are promoted and adopted by certain developed States and are directed towards exerting pressure on developing countries, with the aim of preventing them from exercising their sovereign rights and of obtaining from them advantages of all kinds."[8] In response, the United States "abstained in the vote on paragraph 94 because of unacceptable language relating to economic measures by developed countries against developing States."[9] The United States "reserved its position on

paragraph 95 because it did not agree with the listing of those obstacles categorized as being major impediments to the advancement of women."[10] These obstacles were "imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, expansionism, apartheid and all other forms of manifestations of foreign occupation, domination and hegemony, and the growing gap between the levels of economic development of developed and developing countries."[11]

The United States called for a vote and then voted against paragraph 98, which proclaimed that the continuation of the unequal position of women was the direct result of an unequal international economic order that benefited the Western capitalist nations to the detriment of newly independent nations in the developing world. Similarly, the United States reserved its position on paragraph 100 "because it did not accept the underlying philosophy of the paragraph as it concerned the economic situation in debtor and developing nations."[12] Perhaps not surprisingly, paragraph 100 criticized the high interest rates and deteriorating terms of trade that were effectively recolonizing many Third World nations in the wake of the global debt crisis.[13]

More important, the United States voted against paragraph 259 "because of its opposition to the references in the eighth and ninth subparagraphs to the imposition of sanctions and aid to liberation movements."[14] By voting against paragraph 259, the United States resisted the overwhelming international call to impose sanctions on the South African apartheid regime and to support the independence struggles in Namibia and Angola, a position that antagonized many African women attending the conference. Similarly, the United States voted against the paragraph on "Palestinian Women and Children" because of its "strong objection to the introduction of tendentious and unnecessary elements into the Forward-Looking Strategies document which have only a nominal connection with the unique concerns of women."[15]

Significantly, the FLS reflects not a single reservation submitted by a state socialist country or one of their allies in the developing world. They voted in favor of all of the paragraphs dealing with purely women's issues, as well as those that linked women's issues with the larger social, political, and economic issues of the late Cold War. By 1985, the East European countries pushed for greater attention to the theme of peace, given the realities of the arms race. Disarmament and ending regional conflict were major undercurrents at the Nairobi conference, perhaps best exemplified by the success of the Peace Tent at the NGO forum.[16] In 1984 and 1985, Bulgaria had hosted two Peace Schools, bringing together women from

FIGURE 12.1 Ana Durcheva at the Nairobi Peace Tent, 1985.

the developing world and Western Europe to try to organize coordinated resistance to the growing threat of nuclear war. Some of the official delegations at the conference referenced the UN Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, arguing that "the more women took an active stand for peace, the better chance there would be to attain lasting peace."[17] Moreover, the FLS was filled with references to the "arms race in outer space" and nuclear proliferation, statements obviously aimed at the Reagan administration in the United States.[18]

But relationships among women were somewhat more civil in Nairobi than they had been in Mexico City and Copenhagen; many of them knew one another from previous conferences, and transnational friendships had been forged. In her book *Connective Leadership* (1996), the American sociologist Jean Lipman-Blumen recalls how she turned to Elena Lagadinova for help in dealing with the Nairobi housing crisis.[19] American women attending the NGO Forum had their hotel reservations canceled so their rooms could be given to members of the official government delegations. Lipman-Blumen knew Lagadinova from a previous visit to Bulgaria and asked for assistance, which Lagadinova provided. Nevertheless, the official members of the US delegation were still the subjects of much hostility, and

FIGURE 12.2 Ana Durcheva with other forum attendees, Nairobi, (second from left), 1985.

their report to the House of Representatives after the conference acknowledged that they were vocally "jeered" at by other delegations when they opposed the paragraph on Palestinian women.[20] What was interesting in Nairobi, however, was the extent to which American women at the NGO Forum opposed the women in the official US delegation, believing them to be the lackeys of the conservative Reagan administration.[21] Angela Davis openly rejected Maureen Reagan, claiming that Reagan did not represent the interests of all American women.[22]

But as in Copenhagen, the word "Zionism" continued to be the biggest impediment to an overall consensus, demonstrating that the Eastern Bloc countries and their allies in the Global South were set on deliberately antagonizing the United States. Under orders once again from male politi-

cians back home, the US delegation threatened to walk out of the conference if the word "Zionism" was included in the document. Many African and Arab countries also said they would leave Nairobi if the word was deleted. According to Leticia Shahani, the secretary-general of the Nairobi conference, on the last day of the meeting, a small group of "major stakeholders" met in private.[23] The meeting included some Western European nations, the Palestinians, the UN Secretariat, the Kenyan government, the Americans, and the Soviets. In the end, it was the Kenyan government, as the host of the conference, that pressed the groups to accept a compromise. The phrase "all forms of racial discrimination" replaced "Zionism" in the FLS text. The conference document was adopted by consensus in the hours just before dawn.

Although the FLS still overwhelmingly reflected the Second/Third World point of view with regard to peace issues, the exclusion of the word "Zionism" was seen as a major victory for the US delegation. Maureen Reagan was quoted in *Time* magazine as saying, "I said I was coming home with a document that did not have Zionism in it, and I did."[24] To some observers, the UN Decade for Women ended on a positive note, with the FLS setting out a clear agenda for women in the years to come. But conservatives, who had hoped that Reagan would boycott the conference, poured out plenty of ire at the "Nattering Nabobs in Nairobi."[25] A few pro-life Christian groups participated in the NGO Forum and were appalled by the "radical feminist agenda" they found espoused by most of the women in attendance. Even more upsetting for the right-wing women was the "sustained attack" mounted against the US delegation by "Soviet bloc and Third World regimes."[26] Reflecting on the political atmosphere of the conference, a conservative Australian journalist wrote, "'Are the U.S. and the USSR Morally Equivalent?' That question was answered with an overwhelming 'No' at Nairobi. The U.S. was Public Enemy No. 1; as for the USSR, with the exception of a few pro-lifers, some protesting Ukrainians, and a dissident Soviet Jew newly emigrated to Israel, the consensus seemed to be that the USSR is, at worst, morally neutral."[27]

Nairobi represented the pinnacle of the Bulgarians' efforts at international organizing. With the unanimous support of the women from the state socialist countries and their allies in the developing world, CBWM president Elena Lagadinova, was elected general rapporteur of the conference, a major accomplishment for a small country like Bulgaria. The general rapporteur would be the face of the UN conference to the world's press, and Lagadinova would not miss an opportunity to champion the

FIGURE 12.3 Ana Durcheva (far left) with Freda Braun (center left), Nairobi, 1985.

advantages of socialism for women.[28] On July 24, 1985, the Bulgarian delegation hosted a cocktail party in honor of Lagadinova's election as general rapporteur in a ballroom of the Hotel International in Nairobi. About 250 official guests were in attendance, including all of the delegations from the socialist countries (the report back to the Bulgarian government noted that Valentina Tereshkova was there for the whole reception).[29] Others in attendance were Shahani and the deputy secretary-general of the conference, as well as other high-ranking UN officials (including representatives from the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women), and a wide variety of delegations from developing countries. According to the Bulgarian delegation's subsequent report, all of the invited members of the US delegation also stopped in to have a drink in Lagadinova's honor—except for Maureen Reagan.

Twenty-five years after the event, Lagadinova remembered having been elected general rapporteur as one of the finest moments of her twenty-two years as head of the CBWM.[30] When I asked her to reflect on Bulgaria's role at the Nairobi conference, she told me many stories about how she used her position as general rapporteur to draw the world's attention to the achievements of women living under socialism in her country. At her first major press conference, Lagadinova recalled doing her best to both

FIGURE 12.4 Elena Lagadinova (left) with a young Irina Bokova (right), Nairobi, 1985.

endear herself to the world's journalists and dispel what she called "anti-socialist propaganda."

Lagadinova remembered that she was very nervous when she took the podium, her pulse racing, when she decided to address the assembled reporters in English. Lagadinova usually spoke Russian (an official UN language) but decided to try her English so she could mention that she was a married woman with three children of her own. She explained that Westerners had a lot of negative stereotypes about socialist women representing their countries at the UN meetings—that they were single women who dedicated their lives to social activism. "I now shall try to speak in English," she told the reporters, "and if my daughter, who is the third (and they all speak English very well) would be hearing now how I speak in English, she would say, 'Oy, Mama! Mama! What kind of courage you have! All these two hundred people, to speak to in a language you don't know!" This solicited laughter from the journalists, and although Lagadinova delivered the remainder of her report in Russian, she believes that her brief foray into English made her seem more approachable to Western and Kenyan journalists covering the conference.[31]

Lagadinova used her position as general rapporteur to try to maximize the number of articles written about socialist Bulgaria in the press.

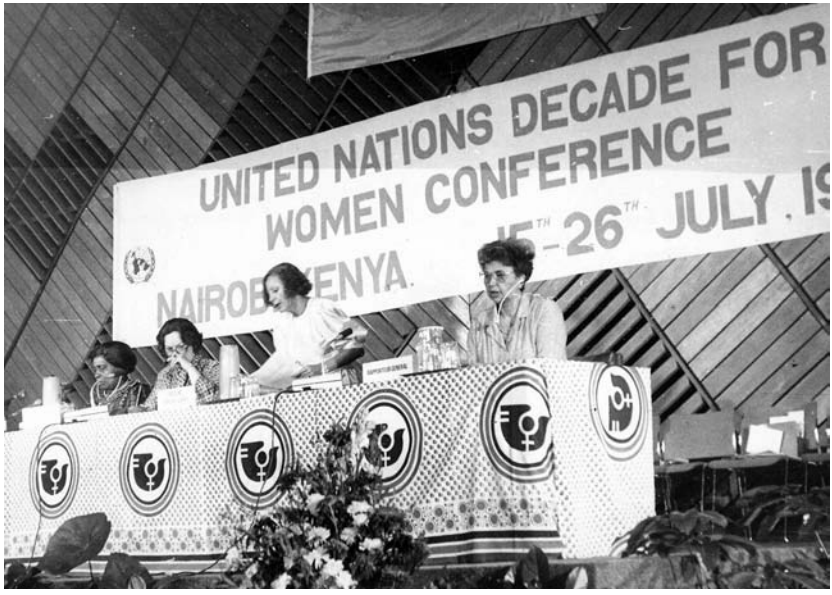

FIGURE 12.5 Elena Lagadinova as general rapporteur, Nairobi, 1985.

In one telling anecdote, she said that a junior member of her delegation, Irina Bokova (who would later become the first woman director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) brought a special bottle of Bulgarian *rakia* to Kenya to celebrate her birthday, which would occur while they were in Nairobi. Lagadinova convinced Bokova that, rather than sharing the rakia with the members of the Bulgarian delegation, she should take the bottle as a gift to the editor of one of the largest daily newspapers in Kenya. Within a few days, the newspaper published an in-depth article about the status of women and families in Bulgaria. Lagadinova also used her contacts with the Kenyan minister of culture to meet influential journalists and disseminate information about her country, distributing thousands of brochures and pamphlets in Arabic, English, French, German, and Spanish. Lagadinova told me that representatives of the other socialist countries were baffled by the number of articles written about Bulgaria compared with all of the other socialist countries combined, but she said it was because she knew how to work with different types of people. "You have to make contact with people with the heart, not with the mind. The mind is ideology," she explained. "Hu-

FIGURE 12.6 Elena Lagadinova (center) with the Kenyan Minister of Culture (center left), Nairobi, 1985.

man contact is something that everyone understands, even if they have different ideology."

Discussing the Nairobi conference with Lagadinova in her home more than thirty years after the events once again reminded me of the perils of oral history. As with Kankasa in Zambia, I genuinely liked Lagadinova; even at her advanced age, her energy and charisma were palpable. Lagadinova charmed me in the same way that she once charmed the press corps in Nairobi, and I struggled with my own scholarly desire to maintain objectivity. Of course, Lagadinova's recollections would be told from her own perspective, but I believed (and still believe) that there is value in recording subjective accounts, if only to balance out the plethora of similarly subjective American memoirs and histories of the 1985 conference.

Luckily, contemporaneous records from Nairobi were stored in the Central State Archives, and I could verify many of the details in Lagadinova's accounts. In her official report to the Bulgarian government in 1985, she noted that the women from the Group of 77 (G-77) countries were the most politically active delegates at the conference and were the major contributors to the writing of the Forward-Looking Strategies.[32] The

CBWM noted with pride that the G-77 women supported all of the positions promoted by the socialist countries, although she claimed that they had focused on "their own political and socio-economic problems, like the question of peace, apartheid, Palestine, the New International Economic Order, and others."[33] That the G-77 countries were ideologically in sync with the socialist countries was therefore considered a political success for the CBWM.

For the Zambian women who attended, the Nairobi conference was recalled as a transformative moment for the women of Africa. In 1985, Amy Kabwe was the chairperson of the Home Economics Association of Zambia, and she represented her organization as part of the UNIP Women's League. As a prominent and educated Zambian woman, she was asked to serve as a member of the Zambian delegation to the official conference. In 2013, I asked her to recall for me her specific memories of the events and deliberations:

> I remember I was staying in a certain hotel, west of Nairobi. We used to ride [a bus] to go to the conference. At that time Kenya seemed to be more advanced than Zambia, so we were going shopping, shopping, shopping. We made some friends, who we have forgotten already because of lack of correspondence. But it was very interesting, the discussions we had . . . of what women have been involved in . . . To me, [the] 1985 Nairobi conference . . . marks the realization of women's rights: what a woman is and what conflicts, especially from the males, she was facing. So it was an eye-opener somehow to so many things that we never saw as women in Zambia, things we took for granted—that that's how they were to be, and yet they were wrong. Now women have woken up. They are even brave enough to tell their husbands, "I am working and you are sitting there!" Now men are giving a hand, and this started in Nairobi.[34]

Together with Kabwe, Lily Monze worked for the Zambian government as a member of the official delegation and attended the NGO Forum. Although she was still responsible for writing the reports and briefings, she remembered that she had many friends in Nairobi and therefore made a greater effort to socialize with her fellow African activists. For Monze, it was very important that the conference was held in an African country and that the "women of the world were going to be our guests." The last conference of the UN Decade highlighted the problems of African women, which, according to Monze, were different from the problems

women faced in the Western countries. Monze recalled that by 1985, many male African leaders wanted to ignore women's issues, and the conference in Kenya helped to raise awareness and supported women working within the government who were calling for legal reforms. The UN conference in Africa, and the resources and attention it focused on women's issues, forced male African leaders to attend to the status of women in their own countries if they wanted to be perceived as "progressive" in the eyes of the international community associated with the left, meaning both the Eastern Bloc and the Non-Aligned Movement. The status of women domestically became a yardstick by which nations measured their progress toward modernization.

But most important for the Zambian women I interviewed was the Nairobi conference's attention to the issue of apartheid and the world's opposition to the South African regime. Although Zambian women appreciated the discussion of women's issues, for them the most pressing topic had to do with racism and neocolonialism in the face of a looming debt crisis. This politicization of the conference irked the American delegation, and Maureen Reagan justified US opposition to several key paragraphs of the FLS by insisting that the conference should focus exclusively on women: "As was well known, [the US] delegation had long been concerned and sought to minimize the insertion of general political issues with only a nominal connection with the unique concerns of women into the Conference—a Conference which should have been devoted to the unique concerns of women. Unfortunately, other delegations seemed to be less interested in those issues, and instead had used the Conference to pursue the same divisive political issues that permeated the entire United Nations system."[35]

But the African women and their allies in the developing world openly opposed the United States and insisted that women's lives had to be considered within larger geopolitical contexts. In their political demands for a more just economic system and for an end to the arms race, the state socialist women locked arms with the women from the developing world, forging a super-coalition that kept the US delegation from limiting the conference agenda. In her reflections on the Nairobi conference, the US-based academic Amrita Basu noted, "Women from the Third World also more openly criticized oppressive social and political practices than they had in 1975 or in 1980. . . . By 1985 it was clear that Third World women were constructing indigenous feminist theory and practices that linked the struggle against sexual inequality to other political struggles."[36] What

Basu did not acknowledge were the underlying collaborations between the state socialist women and Third World women and how this impacted the development of "indigenous" feminist theories of the developing world. Indeed, it could be argued that the first generation of African women's activists—including Lily Monze, Senior Chieftainess Nkomeshya Mukamambo II, and Chibesa Kankasa—were identified, trained, and professionalized through the resources made available to them due to the superpower rivalry of the Cold War. Perhaps the best example of this is the career of the Tanzanian Gertrude Mongella, a woman who attended the Bulgarian training course in 1980 and later served as the secretary-general of the fourth UN Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995.

Of course, Zambian women also had contacts and received support from the Non-Aligned Movement and from other bilateral ties with developing countries in Asia and Latin America, but it would be wrong to ignore the role played by the Eastern Bloc countries. By dedicating resources to support the experience exchanges, the participation in training seminars and the conference attendance of so many delegates to Nairobi, the CBWM and its allies in the WIDF not only succeeded in antagonizing the Americans but also forged a community of women who saw themselves as part of a progressive international network for social change, a network that even included American women disaffected with their own government (such as WREE). All of the Zambian women I interviewed remember the final years of the Cold War as times of great fear, but also of great hope and possibility. No one imagined the momentous geopolitical shifts that would occur just five years later when the Berlin Wall fell and the entire state socialist system lost legitimacy. The bipolar world became a unipolar one, with the United States as the sole remaining superpower. Unfettered free markets and relentless economic globalization precipitated the break-up of welfare states across Eastern Europe and the developing world, often through the conditionality and structural adjustment required by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This process dismantled many of the state supports for women that the activism of the UN Decade had endeavored so hard to create.

Conclusion. Phantom Herstories

Most likely, even after being a Don Quixote, you will wake up one day like Alonso Quijana in the strong grip of Samson Carrasco and remember with only a wistful smile that you used to wear the knight's armor and the golden helmet of Mambrino.—MARIA DINKOVA, "Strasti po Velikata Zhenska Revolyutsiya"

I sacrificed my life fighting for Zambia's independence and I would like to see and leave it self-reliant in which people are ready to sacrifice their toil and sweat to grow the economy on their own without help from others. . . . The destruction in the economy is too much, but, all hope is not lost and as long as we join hands, we can rebuild Zambia. It is not enough to be independent politically, yet economically poor.—LILY MONZE, quoted in Jeff Kapembwa, "The 'Unsung Heroes and Heroines of Zambia'"

I met Ana Durcheva in the summer of 2010 when I began doing research on communist women's movements. We spoke Bulgarian during our initial interviews but switched to English so she could practice. Ana had traveled around the world with the WIDF, forging alliances with women from all corners of the globe. She lived for eight years in the former East Germany and returned to Bulgaria in 1990 just after East European communism collapsed. She worked as a translator with steady commissions until the global financial crisis hit Bulgaria, sucking the life out of the local economy by 2012. During her years of unemployment, Ana read so many books that the city's librarians knew her by her first name.

She also became one of my most honest sources on the history of the socialist women's movement during the Cold War. Ana was the most brutally truthful of my interview subjects about the geopolitical context of her former work and seemed the least interested in preserving her legacy. She spoke openly about conflicts and misunderstandings among women's activists and her personal hatred of Hortensia Bussi de Allende, the widow of Chile's slain President Salvador Allende (who, according to Durcheva, spent her fifteen-year exile sponging off of the Eastern Bloc countries, demanding champagne, caviar, furs, and access to the best hairdressers and most luxurious hotel suites while she traveled the world, keeping the memory of her Marxist husband alive). Where my other informants seemed predisposed to talk only about themselves and their own roles, Durcheva often stood back and took a bird's-eye view of events, pointing out the contradictions and hardships of being an activist under communism. Durcheva always called the articles she wrote for the magazine *Women of the Whole World* "propaganda," but she was quick to point out that "everything was propaganda back then. You [Americans] had your own propaganda, too." I came to appreciate her candor.

On a Tuesday in December 2014, I hailed a cab in the center of Sofia and traveled to one of the residential suburbs to visit Ana. When I arrived at her block of flats, I rang the buzzer on the ground floor. Because the door was broken, Ana came down to greet me, smiling and kissing me on both cheeks. I had brought a box of Mozart chocolates from Germany and a one-liter bottle of Ruski Standart, knowing that vodka was her preferred libation.

On that chilly December day, she wore a wine-colored velour tracksuit, and her once dyed-brown hair fell white to her shoulders. Since the last time I had visited her, Ana had experienced health problems. She'd taken seriously ill just one month earlier, and she regaled me with the details of her sickness and her rather miraculous recovery. She then asked after my daughter, and we shared stories about the difficulties of living in Germany (where I was based at the time). I so missed the warmth and openness of southeastern Europe, I told her, and she explained that she had felt the same way when she lived in East Berlin in the 1980s.

We discussed children and education; I worried about my twelve-year-old daughter being thrown into German school. Ana told me she believed that all educational opportunities were a gift and said that somewhere among her possession she kept an old handbag of her mother's. "In

FIGURE CONC.1 The author (far left) with Ana Durcheva (center) and Elena Lagadinova (at right), 2014.

the bottom of the handbag I have the slip for the fees for my first year of school. I kept it all these years, because it was such a terrible hardship for my mother to send me to school. Then they abolished those fees a few years later. She never had to pay it again because the state gave me a scholarship for being from an impoverished family. I grew up knowing that my mother could not have sent me to school if not for the help I received from the state."

Despite her humble origins, Ana went on to have a long and distinguished career, even though she claimed she never joined the Communist Party. She loved her work, especially her labors as an international women's activist, but not everything was rosy. She spent much of her life as the single mother of one daughter, and balancing her job with her family responsibilities had not always been easy. She shared her regrets:

> When she was a nine or ten, my daughter had some very contagious disease, some pox, I can't remember. It was so bad that she was quarantined in the apartment with an "X" on the door. During this time, I had to go to a world congress on the rights of children. I was the tenth member of the Bulgarian delegation—the lowest member—

but they assigned me as the vice-chair of the commission on the question of national independence. Vilma Espín de Castro was the chair, but she was never there. I chaired the whole commission for the duration of the conference. I felt so important up there on my podium, doing this work to help children live in countries now free of colonial oppression.

Ana lit a cigarette, inhaling and then exhaling a lung full of smoke. "I had to travel," she said, "so I left Dora in the care of my sister, who was a nurse. My sister's husband and my aunt, who was like a grandmother to my daughter after my mother died, were all looking after her. I came home as soon as the congress ended, and she got better, and everything was fine."[1]

Ana tapped the end of her cigarette on the ashtray and continued:

A few weeks later, my daughter came home with a note from her teacher at school. It was a note saying I should read an essay that [Dora] wrote, because the teacher was going to post it on the school bulletin board as the best essay of the class. The essay was about how I left her alone in Bulgaria to go to a conference to fight for the rights of children. [Dora] wrote that she was taken care of by her aunt and uncle, and her grandmother, but that she spent long days sitting on the couch with the dog. We had a shepherd's dog, you know?

"An *ovcharka*?" I asked. "A Caucasian shepherd?" Ana nodded and gestured toward the window. "We lived on the ground floor then. From the sofa in the sitting room you could look out on a public square. [Dora] wrote that while her mother was fighting for the rights of children everywhere, she sat on the sofa with the dog, staring out at all the mothers walking and holding hands with their children on the square. The teacher loved the essay and posted it on that board. I had to endure that pain for three months before they took it down. It was so humiliating, like the teacher was trying to shame me."

Ana shifted in her seat, shaking her head. "You know even if I'd been in Sofia, I would have been at work until ten or eleven in the night. Maybe I would have slept a few hours in the bed, but the same people would have looked after [Dora]. My work was very important to me, and I had a job to do. But I never forget this essay." She sighed, brushing a hand through her hair. "There is another black spot on my autobiography, which I will never forget. When I was studying at the university, I was on a stipend from the state. After the end of my first year, I didn't realize that I was going to re-

ceive a stipend for the summer. My mother didn't know this, either, and although I know she really needed the money, I took my summer stipend and bought myself the complete works of Dostoyevsky. Ten volumes. I felt terrible, but I really wanted to read them. I lied to my mother for Dostoyevsky." Ana pointed up at her bookshelf, where I saw the ten hardbound volumes prominently displayed among her books. "Many years later," she said, "My daughter had a friend who came to my house. She saw that my shelves were covered with books, and she noticed my ten volumes of Dostoyevsky. She told me: 'I hear that a person is not a person unless he has read at least two volumes of Dostoyevsky,' and she asked to borrow two of mine. I lent them to her, but she did not return them for a long time. One day, I told my daughter, 'I don't want you to come back to this house again unless you return with my two volumes of Dostoyevsky.'"

Ana leaned back into the couch, throwing two open palms into the air above her shoulders, "Look what I have done for Dostoyevsky!"

Our conversation then turned to the books we had been reading, and her passion for Russian literature. "I think it's time for me to reread all ten volumes of Dostoyevsky again," Ana said, smiling. "It will be my New Year's resolution."

When I finally left her apartment on Tuesday, December 23, we agreed that I would return on Saturday, December 27, after the Christmas holidays. Dora called just before I left, and I spoke with her on the phone. Dora hoped she would be able to join us on Saturday. Ana and I parted in good spirits. I intended to call her on Friday to confirm the time, but the hour grew late and I decided to ring first thing the next morning. My mobile phone woke me instead. The caller's number appeared on the screen, but it was unfamiliar.

"*Halo*?" I said, rubbing my eyes.

"I am sorry for calling you so early," a voice said in Bulgarian. "But I know you had an appointment with my mother today, and I am calling to tell you that she can't make it." A long pause. "Last night, she died."

The Bulgarian word *pochina* (died) rang in my ears. "Who is this?" I asked in Bulgarian. "Who died?"

"My mother," the voice—Dora—said. "My mother died. Last night."

The sleep fog cleared. "Oh, my God," I said.

"A heart attack," said Dora.

I swallowed.

Dora took my silence for confusion. "My mother won't be able to keep her appointment with you today."

Later, Dora called me again with details for the funeral. "Please come," she said. "She was cooking for you when she passed. I think she would want you to be there."

The following day I stood with Elena Lagadinova in Sveti Sedmochislenitsi Church in Sofia waiting for the service to begin. Lagadinova rarely left her apartment; I was stunned that she had agreed to come with me. We were greeted by three of her former employees from the CBWM, including Veselina Grueva. They were all older than Ana. I half-listened to them discussing who among them was dead or still living.

Once the priests arrived, all of the mourners lit their candles and stood up, even the oldest for whom standing was a great effort. I held my candle with dozens of others, as pallbearers bore Ana in an open casket. They placed her under the intricately carved iconostasis where the golden faces of Hristos Pantokrator and Sveta Bogoroditsa gazed down on her pale face. Three baritone Bulgarian Orthodox priests chanted a funerary liturgy accompanied by a choir. Frankincense wafted from a swinging censer.

In the Bulgarian Orthodox cosmology, the spirit of the deceased lingers for forty days after the death of the body. During this time, the person is supposed to remain near to the loved ones she left behind. When it came time to pay my final respects, I didn't know what to do, so I placed my warm hand on her cold one. I wished Ana peace and hoped Heaven's library contained all ten volumes of Dostoyevsky.

After her death I often returned to my notes on the conversation Ana and I shared on that Tuesday in December 2014. I had spent almost four hours at her apartment, and we spoke about a great many things. In retrospect, I am convinced she knew she was going to die soon. She had taken out a home equity loan when she had steady work before the financial crisis and used the money to replace old windows in her flat, but she then found herself unemployed and unable to pay the loan back. On top of that, the Sofia central heating monopoly was suing her for several years' worth of unpaid bills and penalties. After working full time for more than forty-five years, Ana's postsocialist pension was a pittance, insufficient to meet even her most basic needs and less than her heating bills in the winter months. Her recent illness and the high cost of medicine had pushed her further into debt, and although she was still an excellent Bulgarian-English translator, there was no work for her. If she lost the impending court case, she would be forced to sell her apartment and would become homeless at seventy. She would have no choice but to move in with Dora's family. Only

after she died did I recall Ana telling me that she had stopped taking her blood pressure medication. "I don't want to be a burden."

I have replayed our final conversation in my head many times, seeing everywhere hints and signs that Ana knew these days were her last. I think I became her unwitting confessor; Ana used our time together to unburden herself of regrets. She mourned the lie she had told her mother so many years earlier and wished she had been a better mother to her only child. But there was another story she told me that day, a story that brought her to tears. Durcheva recalled a black South African woman, Ruth Maputi, who had been her colleague at the WIDF office in Berlin throughout the 1980s. Maputi was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party and had dedicated almost every waking moment to the struggle against apartheid, risking her life and serving time in jail for her activism. A passionate speaker and tireless agitator, Ruth crisscrossed the globe for the WIDF, explaining to world leaders about the brutal and unjust nature of the apartheid regime, particularly its effects on women and children, and persuading them to join in the economic sanctions against South Africa. "She was older than me, and I looked up to her. The depth of her political commitment," Ana said.

After the Berlin Wall fell, the staff of the WIDF's office in East Berlin disbanded, and Ana returned to Bulgaria. The two women lost touch, but Ana thought of Ruth when she read that Nelson Mandela had been released from prison and South Africa finally had free elections. Everything Ruth had worked for had become a reality. Apartheid was crushed. During the chaos of the 1990s in Bulgaria, the banking collapses and hyperinflation, the rise of the mafia and increasing crime rate, the rapid privatization and dismantling of the welfare state, and the shrinking employment opportunities for middle-aged women like Ana, she took comfort that Ruth lived in a country where blacks and whites were finally equal. In her own small way, she felt she had had a hand in that change, if only as a colleague and confidante of Ruth. "But sometime in 2005 or 2006, before the crisis, I met an old colleague of ours from Berlin," Ana told me. "I asked if she had an address for Ruth, because I wanted to send a letter. This colleague told me that Ruth had died and that she had been very poor and barely able to survive after 1990. She died living alone in some small village, completely disregarded by all those new politicians in the ANC."

Ana Durcheva's face tightened, and she clenched her jaw, her eyes bleary. "Of all the women I met and worked with over those years, no one

was more ideologically committed than dear Ruth. Can you imagine? A whole life given to the cause, only to be completely forgotten by those enjoying the fruits of the new world you helped to create?"

AFTER THE CBWM'S TRIUMPH in Nairobi, the Bulgarians capitalized on their momentum, and hoped to spearhead an international peace initiative that would bring the world's women together to prevent the total nuclear annihilation threatened by the two superpowers. In 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev celebrated his twin policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in Moscow at a massive international gathering of women. In 1988, the CBWM organized a meeting between the heads of women's organizations in North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries with the ministers of foreign affairs from the Warsaw Pact countries. The new openness of the Soviet Union permitted public debate on women's issues, and across the Eastern Bloc citizens were beginning to engage in civil society movements. Sonya Bakish, who by then had retired as the editor of *Zhenata Dnes*, joined the "eco-glasnost" movement in the northern Bulgarian border town of Russe, protesting environmental pollution of the Danube. Lagadinova was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women to serve a three-year term from 1988 until June 1991 and used her position to forge new alliances with American and Canadian women skeptical of state socialist women's organizations.[2]

In preparation for a renewed program of advocacy, the CBWM organized its fourth national conference to elect new regional committee members and to issue a new set of guiding principles for the organization. Bulgaria's leader, Todor Zhivkov, addressed the conference on October 20, 1988, and stated that the CBWM "must be a partner and opponent, opponent and partner of the state, economic and public bodies and organizations" to further assist Bulgarian women find work-family balance.[3] Zhivkov openly acknowledged that mass organizations affiliated with the state had a responsibility to keep the state on task and to hold the state accountable for its deficiencies. After two decades in office, Lagadinova was reelected president of the CBWM and given a mandate to continue with her international work. On September 12–15, 1989, representatives of the WIDF Executive Council convened in Sofia to plan their international activities for the coming decade. The theme of their meeting was "Challenges and Future Perspectives in a Changing World." They had no idea just how much their world was about to change.

FIGURE CONC.2 Meeting between NATO women and Warsaw Pact foreign ministers, Sofia, 1988.

FIGURE CONC.3 Elena Lagadinova, WIDF council meeting, Sofia, 1989.

The collapse of state socialism happened suddenly and without much warning in most East European countries. On November 9, 1989, jubilant Berliners mounted the wall that once divided their city. On November 10, Zhivkov, who had been Bulgaria's leader for thirty-five years, was forced into sudden retirement by members of his own party who embraced the winds of change blowing down from the GDR. Not long after, young women affiliated with Bulgaria's new leaders convened a spontaneous meeting to dissolve the CBWM and create the Union of Democratic Women, a new women's organization without Lagadinova. Realizing that some of her own friends and protégés had turned against her, Lagadinova ordered an audit of the CBWM's finances before she bitterly submitted her resignation and retired from public life. A new generation of Bulgarian women would now lead a diverse array of independent women's movements affiliated with domestic political parties. But most of the women associated with Lagadinova found themselves unemployed. Unlike Lagadinova, who was already sixty and eligible to retire, women like Ana Durcheva had to find ways to survive in new labor markets in which "women's rights activist" was no longer a job.

After 1989, Bulgaria became a democratic country, but for the privilege of free, multiparty elections and free, competitive markets ruled by the laws of supply and demand Bulgarians paid a high price. The 1990s were a chaotic decade that brought crime and corruption. The early 2000s saw only a few years of stability as Bulgarians hoped to put their communist past behind them. On January 1, 2007, Bulgaria officially joined the European Union and earned the distinction of being its poorest member state. The beginning of the 2008 financial crisis which started in the United States, devastated Bulgaria's economy. By 2011, the European Commission found, 44 percent of Bulgarians were experiencing "severe material deprivation."[4] In that same year, 49 percent of the total population was at risk for poverty or social exclusion. Two years later, Bulgarians earned an average monthly salary of roughly 400 euros ($520), just a bit more than $6,000 per year,[5] even though prices for consumer goods were no lower in Bulgaria than in other European Union countries. The end of the Cold War brought misery and hardships to many ordinary Bulgarians.[6]

But before the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Claremont Graduate School in California awarded Lagadinova its President's Medal of Outstanding Achievement. In his speech, the school's president said, "To the benefit of all nations, you have taken . . . the world stage. Long before a new world order emerged, you envisioned one. You acted as if

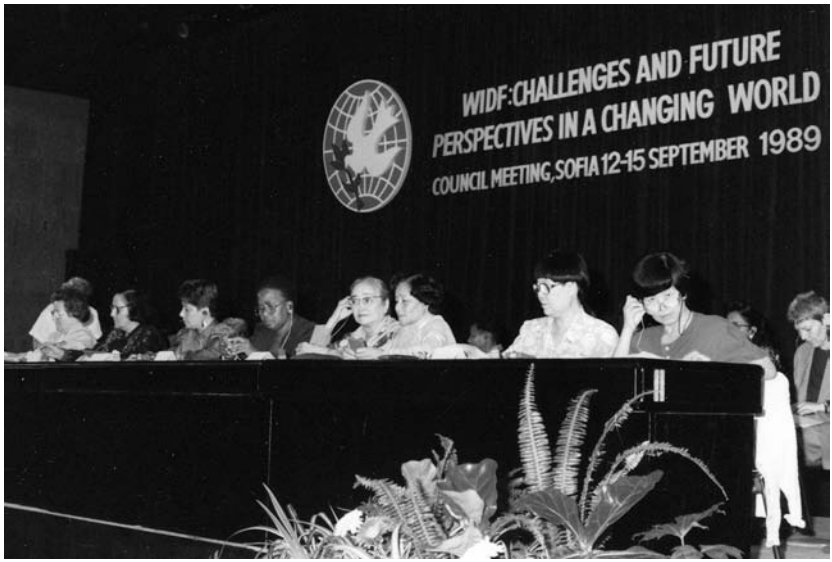

FIGURE CONC.4 WIDF council meeting, Sofia, 1989.

it already existed, and through your actions you contributed to its emergence. You reached beyond the narrow confines of party and nationality to create an international network of scholars and policymakers devoted to the improvement of women's lives. Through your work with the United Nations, you have influenced women's lives throughout the world, and through them the destinies of their families."[7]

Lagadinova hoped this award, bestowed on her by an American university, signaled the beginning of an era of East-West cooperation in a new world guided by an international culture of peace and friendship.[8] Instead, it marked the beginning of Lagadinova's precipitous decline into anonymity and the start of many personal hardships as she found herself vilified by the "democratic" politicians that ruled her country after 1989, including some of her own, younger colleagues who were taking up posts in the reformed Bulgarian Socialist Party.

In Zambia, the UNIP-WL used the Nairobi conference to demand legislative action and had one great triumph with the passage of the Intestate Succession Act in 1989, protecting the rights of Zambian women from their husbands' property-grabbing relatives. But their moment of glory was short-lived. Kenneth Kaunda knew that, without the support of his allies in the Eastern Bloc, the days of his one-party participatory democ-

racy were numbered. Anyone associated with UNIP was punted after the party lost the first multiparty elections in 1991. Unlike most of the Bulgarian women who owned their own apartments, UNIP officials lived in government housing from which they were evicted when the party was voted out. The party had a strict leadership code that severely punished corruption, and few UNIP members had amassed any private wealth during their time in office. Having served his country since 1964, even Kaunda found himself homeless after 1991 and spent a few years bunking with friends and family before former UNIP supporters took up a collection to buy "the father of Zambian independence" a home. The UNIP members who had taken mortgages to buy private property lost their homes when they lost their positions; the banks immediately foreclosed. Chibesa Kankasa told me that her house was spared because one of her male relatives paid off her outstanding debt. But many of her colleagues were not so fortunate. Every woman I spoke to in Zambia shared stories about the personal tragedies that befell women after the political upheavals following the collapse of UNIP. As had happened in Bulgaria, democracy and free markets brought privatization and the rapid breakdown of state services, particularly in rural areas.

The connection between the Zambian and Bulgarian women's organizations fell apart as the women involved scrambled to make sense of their new realities. Throughout the chaos of the 1990s, however, there was one ongoing legacy of Second World–Third World collaboration: the educational and training opportunities provided to Zambian women and girls during the Cold War. Indeed, four of the five women I interviewed in Zambia in 2013 had children who received university educations on fully paid scholarships in the Eastern Bloc countries, and Chieftainess Nkomeshya affirmed that Zambian women of all ages received many stipends to study in the Second World. From the records available, it seems that the most common scholarships were for degrees in medicine, pharmacy, and pedagogy, meaning that African women specialized in healthcare and education, two sectors with great demand for labor in their home countries. The most notable of the Zambian women was Kankasa's eldest daughter, who studied medicine in the Soviet Union and in 2013 was the director of Zambia's largest AIDS hospital (funded, ironically, by USAID).

In one of my last interviews with Kankasa, I opened my computer to show her photographs I had scanned from the Bulgarian archives. As I was flipping through the images, Kankasa recognized her younger self in

FIGURE CONC.5 Chibesa Kankasa at a WIDF meeting, circa 1975.

a photo from a WIDF meeting, and her eyes lit up. "Look," she said, "That is me! Look at me!"

Kankasa smiled and studied the photo. "May I take it?" she asked.

I gave her the laptop, and she walked toward the kitchen, calling out in Bembe. I did not follow her but waited in her living room. After her husband's death, Kankasa left the UNIP-WL to become the Zambian high commissioner (ambassador) to Kenya and was abroad when UNIP fell from power. Respecting her as one of the mothers of their nation, the new government kept her in place for a year before she was recalled and asked to retire. Unlike her counterparts in Bulgaria, however, Kankasa was still considered a "big woman" in Zambia and had been given the honorific title "Mama" so that she was always referred to as "Mama Kankasa" in the domestic media.[9] In 2002, Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa awarded Kankasa the prestigious Order of the Eagle (Second Division) for her services to the nation.[10]

When Kankasa returned, she handed me my computer and asked if I would make a copy of the photograph for her. I told her I would make

prints and closed the laptop. She was clearly delighted to see a photograph of her younger self, and she seemed wistful for a past that was becoming more remote with each passing year. "How many places I've been, my dear Kristen," she said. "How I struggled for my country!"

Kankasa's failing health reminded me that the voices of state socialist women's activists would soon be lost. The stories of the Second World–Third World coalitions between women were fading from the world. Ana Durcheva was already dead. Since I started interviewing her, Maria Dinkova had suffered a severe stroke that limited her mobility and made her dependent on her grown son. Elena Lagadinova lived in seclusion in Sofia, alienated from two of her children and mostly forgotten by her compatriots. She died alone at home on October 29, 2017. Chieftainess Nkomeshya, while well known in her own country because of her continued political career as a tribal leader, was barely remembered outside Zambia. She proudly showed me a letter she had once received from the American Biographical Institute informing her that she had won a "woman of the year" honor. I knew this to be a classic "who's who" scam, but I said nothing after I learned that she had no interest in buying the expensive plaque they were trying to sell her. It was enough for her that someone in the United States thought she was worthy of an award, of recognition. All of the women I met in Bulgaria and Zambia were eager to speak with me, hoping that somehow their work would be remembered.

Within the pages of this book, I have tried to provide a window onto the local histories of women's organizing in Bulgaria and Zambia after World War II and to suggest that the United States was a relative latecomer when it came to women's rights. As Bulgarian women helped to radically transform their country from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and Zambian women took up arms to fight against continued British colonial oppression, it is important to recall that American women were being told that desiring careers outside the home would make them neurotic. After years of being persecuted as deviant agents of world communism, women's rights advocates in the United States finally enjoyed some state support in 1961. President John F. Kennedy created his Commission on the Status of Women in direct response to the supposed threat of Soviet science and technology, fearing that the communist commitment to women's education and employment gave them an upper hand. The seeds for the second wave women's movement were thus planted and watered with US fears of communist superiority. Kennedy and Nixon both created presi-

dential committees to deal with women's rights in direct response to Cold War considerations.

It was the Second World countries that pushed for the creation of an International Women's Year, which then turned into a decade with three key conferences. Hand-in-hand with their allies in the developing countries, state socialist women hoped to use these conferences to give women a voice in international relations. A close reading of the official documents produced by these conferences, together with a glimpse into the backroom machinations, reveals an ongoing state of conflict and rivalry between a handful of advanced capitalist countries on the one hand, and the alliance between the Second and Third World countries on the other. The Eastern Bloc's insistence that states should be responsible for ensuring women's equality, and that women's issues could not be separated from larger political injustices, helped to create a platform where women from the developing world could work together to carve out their own pathways to economic development. Furthermore, the struggles and political commitments of Third World women inspired and catalyzed the social activism of Eastern Bloc women who believed in the moral superiority of the communist ideal, and perhaps later began to recognize its very real failings. The conferences and international activities and alliances built in response to them marked a watershed moment in the history of women's activism. No one denies the importance of the Decade, but few acknowledge the crucial role played by state socialist women in the Eastern Bloc and their socialist allies in the developing world.

Of course, the story is not always rosy. State women's committees did their work under the control of male politicians in what were still patriarchal states. As much as the twentieth century's actually existing socialist nations paid lip service to women's equality, they never fully lived up to their promises. In Bulgaria, the labor force was still segregated along gender lines, wages continued to be unequal, and few women rose to the highest ranks of political power. In Zambia, traditional roles for women still predominated, and in the rural areas women lived no differently than they had before independence. Furthermore, the CBWM and the UNIP-WL operated as part of one-party states that limited opportunities for civic engagement and violated political rights that many people consider basic: freedom of speech, assembly, and conscience. Despite the real shortcomings at home, the coalition of Second World and Third World women played an essential role in shaping the international terms of the debate

about women's issues, especially the language used in key UN documents. Their perspectives infuse the language of the conference documents from the first three world conferences on women and of CEDAW (a treaty, that, as of 2018, the United States still had not ratified).

Yet so much of this history has been lost. After 1989, and particularly by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the voices of the women from the (now former) Second World had thoroughly disappeared from international debates, allowing American women finally to assert unchallenged leadership of the "worldwide women's movement." In 1995, the US delegation included First Lady Hillary Clinton and the first female US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright. Although Vilma Espín still headed the Cuban delegation, her former comrades from the Eastern Bloc were nowhere to be seen. The early 1990s were a time of great confusion in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc as ordinary citizens dealt with unemployment, banking collapses, and hyperinflation just as the once generous social safety net all but evaporated. Indeed, so complete was this blotting out of the Second World in Beijing that the new women representing the now democratic countries of Eastern Europe distributed a "Statement from the Non-Region," as recounted at the beginning of this book.[11]

East European women from the "non-region" felt that they had been completely ignored in the debates and that their perspectives and the hardships instigated by the economic transition process had been misrepresented in the Beijing Platform for Action. The East European women resisted the language in the conference document, which claimed that the feminization of poverty in former socialist countries was a short-term problem and that the transition to democracy had been rapid and "mostly peaceful."[12] Due to the political chaos of the transition, women from Eastern Europe had not been involved in producing the drafts of the Platform for Action, meaning that Western countries—particularly, the United States—had uncontested influence over the language of the final text, a very new circumstance compared with the debates that had characterized the meetings in Mexico, Denmark, and Kenya. A certain brand of liberal, bootstrap-pulling, entrepreneurial feminism predominated over the state-focused activism that had influenced previous UN women's conference documents. Although there were still many leftist and socialist women in attendance at the Beijing conference (most from the developing world), they no longer enjoyed the same power and influence without the financial backing of the Eastern Bloc and the context of superpower rivalry.

Domestically, independent women's organizations replaced the state women's committees in both Zambia and Bulgaria and throughout the former socialist world. Younger women, many of them groomed for activism by their older colleagues, struck out on their own and formed nongovernmental organizations. They applied for Western grants to fund the expansion of a new civil society. But few of these organizations enjoyed the influence of their predecessors. The new independent organizations lacked their own funding, which meant that they enjoyed little autonomy to pursue their own domestic programs and goals.[13] Perhaps more significant, they lacked the power and authority to challenge the juggernaut of neoliberal capitalism intent on destroying whatever remained of the welfare state. The hegemony of the West led to the erosion of what the Indian economist Devaki Jain referred to as a "third space" for women's organizing: "The fading out of the Cold War led to the dimming and reduction of value of this third space, which in later years removed a vital political umbrella that had sheltered the women of the South, given them a legitimacy to stake a claim for justice as part of the movements to address domination. It could be suggested that strong conservative alliances against women's rights were able to set back the UN's work between 1995 and 2005 in part because of the absence of this political space."[14]

Today, little evidence exists of this "third space" once nurtured by the socialist insistence that women's issues must be couched within the greater social, political, and economic issues structuring women's lives and linked to an economic system that allowed for a large social welfare state to support women with maternity leaves, childcare, and so on. If anything, the first part of this sentiment has now been co-opted by Western women and rebranded as "intersectionality" in the wake of strident critiques of liberal feminism's insensitivity to issues of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. The insistence on state provision of services to women was subsumed under the liberal feminist penchant for equality of opportunity in a competitive labor market where laws punish discrimination if it can be proved in court. In the United States, any special entitlement for women is often rejected on the premise that it would create an inequality. Maternity leaves become parental leaves equally available to men and women. Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg and other liberal feminists admonish men to "lean in" and support women in the home rather than pushing for the public provision of childcare.

Western scholarship on international women's rights tends to downplay the role of women's organizing in the former state socialist countries

even when the UN documents from the first three conferences contain countless examples of their influence in shaping the terms of the debate. For instance, in her introduction to *Developing Power* (2004), the collection she co-edited with Arvonne Fraser, Irene Tinker writes, "The General Assembly proclaimed the themes for the [International Women's] year as 'equality, development, and peace,' reflecting the primary preoccupations of the three ideological blocs: the communist East, the industrialized West (now the Global North), and the developing Third World (now the Global South)."[15] Tinker thus maps the industrialized West as "now the Global North" and the Third World as "now the Global South," but the former communist East is nothing at all.

More recently, Kathryn Sklar and Thomas Dublin discussed their curatorial process while compiling the online database "Women and Social Movements, International—1840 to Present." The commercial, subscription-based digital archive, owned by Alexander Street Press, claims to be a "landmark collection of primary materials." In their introduction to the collection, Sklar and Dublin explain, "Through the writings of women activists, their personal letters and diaries, and the proceedings of conferences at which pivotal decisions were made, this collection lets you see how women's social movements shaped much of the events and attitudes that have defined modern life."[16]

After the success of their digital database on women and social movements in the United States, Sklar and Dublin coordinated with an "international advisory board" at the 2008 Berkshire Conference of Women Historians at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis to conceive a strategy to collect materials for an international counterpart. Although the advisory board of the Women and Social Movements, International database claims to have members from thirty countries, sixty-eight of the 144 members were based in the United States. Of the seventy-six remaining members, the vast majority hailed from Western Europe or Australia, with only eight members from former socialist countries in Eastern Europe, a sole member from China, and one member from Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa). Even more telling are the selection criteria used to determine which documents would be included in the database: "We decided to exclude national government publications, allowing only a few exceptions. We decided to limit non-English language materials to those in German, French, and Spanish, since we could read those languages, but in a few key cases of Arabic materials, we decided to include translations."[17]

By excluding "government publications," Sklar and Dublin unilater-

ally determined that state socialist women's committees in Bulgaria and Zambia (and in any of their allied nations in the former Second World or socialist-leaning Third World) do not belong within a database on women's social movements, an idea that, as I discussed in chapter 1, reflects a deep-seated Western bias that women's movements must be independent from the state. Moreover, while I can sympathize with the need to limit foreign-language materials to those the editors can read, the selective inclusion of Arabic-language materials, combined with the total exclusion of Russian-language materials (given that Russian was an official language of the United Nations), exposes yet another factor contributing to the erasure of the history of women's organizations of the former Eastern Bloc.

The creation of this digital database (although an important and valuable achievement) will nevertheless perpetuate the historiographical inequalities between East and West and North and South. More than twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, scholars and activists in the West are still (perhaps unintentionally) contributing to the delegitimation of state socialist women's activism. Indeed, in the 1990s Western feminist NGOs flooded into Eastern Europe to teach women about feminism and gender equality, as if the former communist countries knew nothing about women's rights.[18] Add to this the material inequalities between archival cultures in different parts of the world and it will soon be impossible to challenge the hegemony of Western historiography on this topic. Once the women who lived through the UN Decade are gone, the oral history sources will disappear and all that will remain are the well-preserved and organized documentary records of the West and the scattered, lost, or decaying records of the losers of the Cold War (discussed further in the appendix).

This returns me to the work of Nancy Fraser and her critique that contemporary liberal feminism in the West has become the handmaiden of capitalism. Perhaps the long-standing socialist critique that "feminism" would benefit only elite women has turned out to be more or less true. That neoliberal capitalism so easily reduced the many varieties of second wave Western feminism to its most liberal (i.e., "responsible") form lends credence to the suspicions of many women in state socialist countries that, without fundamental transformations in society, feminism would at best just give certain women equal access to fetishized free markets. By focusing on equality and individual rights, liberal feminism justified the dismantling of welfare states and social supports that ultimately hurt more than helped the majority of women across the globe.

The rise of neoliberalism and its cooptation of a certain brand of lib-

eral feminism is perhaps the reason that the stories of socialist women such as Elena Lagadinova and Chibesa Kankasa have been written out of the feminist historiography of the UN Decade for Women. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe was the result of a carefully crafted neoliberal "Washington consensus" to discredit socialism,[19] and the last full-blown women's conference, held in Beijing in 1995, solidified a certain vision of feminism that downplayed public provision of services and entitlements to support women as workers and mothers and focused more on women's rights as human rights and creating equality of opportunity. Small countries such as Zambia could no longer afford to support maternity leaves and childcare centers. In Beijing, the official statement of the now democratic Zambian government revealed the strain placed on developing countries after 1991:

> Madam President, as you are aware, Zambia is undertaking a stringent programme of restructuring its economy. In embarking on the structural adjustment programme we are mindful of the fact that good living standards for our people cannot be achieved and maintained without sustainable economic growth. Therefore, our challenge is to implement an economic reform programme whose main objective is to promote growth with stability based on an equitable allocation of resources. Our experiences in terms of the very immediate result of the implementation of this structural adjustment process has had serious social consequences. The overwhelming numbers of those affected most are women, especially the rural women who unfortunately are in the majority. In this context, feminization of poverty is a real problem posing a serious challenge to my government. This poverty has manifested itself in a number of ways including lack of income and access to productive resources, hunger, lack of adequate nutrition resulting in malnutrition, ill health, increasing morbidity and mortality from illness, especially the AIDS pandemic. This poverty has also led to limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion. However, Zambia remains firm that these measures will, in the long run, yield positive results.[20]

Like their allies in Zambia, delegates from the former Eastern Bloc countries focused on the hardships caused by the introduction of the market economy. The Bulgarian minister of health explained to the assembled women in Beijing, "The process of democratization and transition to a

market economy opened many opportunities for women, in theory. Many women have taken the risks involved, but not all have been successful, for economic, social and psychological reasons."[21] The Bulgarian delegate insisted that states still have a role to play in guaranteeing women's equal status with men, but the practicality of state provision of social services ran up against the realities of transition and structural adjustment. International financial institutions based in the capitalist West were now calling the shots, forcing countries such as Bulgaria and Zambia to sell off state-owned enterprises and slash public spending. Independent nations that once had a choice to pursue their own paths to economic development were increasingly bullied into accepting the stabilization and structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The third space of the Non-Aligned Movement, which had been carved out within the context of the superpower rivalry of the Cold War, disappeared.

Women's movements and committees in the developing world also lost the platforms from which they once advocated for women's rights. In her history of women at the United Nations, Jain clearly laments the loss of the special third space once fostered by the clash of ideologies. In Jain's estimation, the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Second World women from the international stage allowed for the reassertion of conservative values that valorized women's "natural" (inferior) roles in society. And because feminism became associated with the project of Western neoliberal capitalist hegemony, it is no wonder that many non-Western societies began to reject it as an emancipatory project, viewing it instead as a tool of Western cultural imperialism. Indeed, in "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" (2002), Lila Abu-Lughod marveled at the fact that First Lady Laura Bush could mobilize the discourse of women's emancipation to justify the US invasion of Afghanistan, quoting Gayatri Spivak, who criticized the idea of "white men saving brown women from brown men."[22] To many of the world's women, Western liberal feminism has become just another weapon in the arsenal of US foreign policy.

Of course, multiple forms of feminism always existed in the West, but the US government chose to mobilize what the Republican aide Rita Hauser once called "emergent responsible feminism" to fight its ideological battles with the Eastern Bloc. This form of liberal feminism became something that the US government could support and promote at the United Nations in the official meetings, even while many different types of feminist groups opposed it at the parallel NGO Forums.[23] Alternative

Western feminist voices were drowned out by the type of feminism that did not challenge the expansion of capitalism and US foreign policy interests abroad. This is perhaps why liberal feminism is still overwhelmingly associated with white, middle- and upper-class women in the United States and Western Europe.

Given the damage done by neoliberal capitalism's cooptation of feminism, it is essential to recuperate the lives and stories of socialist women who once fought for a very different version of women's activism in the international arena. It is said that history is written by the victors, and nowhere is this more true than in the historiography of leftist women's activism at the United Nations. Because they were fighting for strong states to protect women's interests, women such as Ana Durcheva, Chibesa Kankasa, Lily Monze, and Krastina Tchomakova are discredited or ignored by those who can see them only as the political tools of authoritarian regimes. Twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, we should be able to recognize and appreciate that the communist, socialist, and African Humanist ideals of the twentieth century inspired many individual men and women to fight for a better world. Indeed, they made real progress on causes such as gender equality and work-family balance. An inability to appreciate the work of the women discussed in this book, and those like them, means that today's women's activists must often reinvent the proverbial wheel when it comes to imagining family-friendly public policies after over three decades of market fundamentalism. This is not to deny that there were also socialist women's activists in the United States and Western Europe. A whole history of leftist women's activism gets ignored in the mainstream narratives of feminism, and this book adds only one little piece to a much larger universe of stories that need to be told.

But I hope this book is not just an exercise in filling a gap in a well-trodden history of global women's movements. It is also intended as a political act of resistance against an entrenched narrative that downplays and delegitimizes the contributions of women from the state socialist countries and their many socialist allies in the developing world. These countries pressured the United Nations to deal with women's issues and, by extension, forced male politicians in the West to take those issues seriously. In the context of the Cold War, male leaders of all nations felt pressured to guarantee some form of women's rights to prove the superiority of their ideological commitments, to demonstrate their modernity, or to keep up with the enemy. The launch of Sputnik probably did as much for American women as any independent women's organization. But the end of the

Cold War let male leaders off the hook. Both religious and market fundamentalists could attack women's rights with impunity.

Moreover, the socialist vision of a strong state supporting social and economic rights provided a powerful alternative to the Western vision of independent feminist movements taking autonomous action for their rights in a society where the state's only role is to provide an even playing field of political and legal equality. This alternative appealed to many of the world's women in the advanced capitalist and developing worlds. Recognizing the rhetorical power of this alternative and its role in fueling the rivalry that created the International Women's Year, the UN Decade for Women, CEDAW, and numerous national and international machineries and institutions to promote women's rights is an important step in undoing capitalism's ongoing stranglehold on contemporary liberal feminism. We need a brand of feminism or some kind of pro-women ideology (if we do not want to be saddled with the historical baggage of the word "feminism") that champions the public good and challenges the market-fundamentalist vision of individual women as free agents with equal opportunities to compete in an economic system in which there are always far more losers than winners. In a democratic system with universal suffrage, women could elect leaders who might mitigate the worst excesses of the market economy and create supports for families that benefit a much broader swath of society than focusing on reforms that ultimately benefit a handful of elite women bashing against the glass ceiling.

Moreover, women (while always mindful of their differences and the power hierarchies among them) can stand together and work to address other issues of social injustice by focusing on the kinds of redistributive politics that will benefit a wider swath of those disenfranchised by the inequalities produced by market economies. George Orwell once said that those who control the past control the future. I hope that, by uncovering one small part of this lost past, this book contributes to building a future in which feminism is no longer the handmaiden of neoliberal capitalism but a broad-based social movement that fights ignorance, prejudice, and injustice in all of its forms, using all possible strategies for change, not just those that are the most compatible with the operations of the unfettered free market.

Appendix. A Few Reflections on the Challenges of Socialist Feminist Historiography

Telling a story about the UN Decade from a non-Western perspective required access to a wide variety of primary sources, many of them outside the capitalist West. When I began a new research project examining the activities of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM), the state socialist-era women's organization that participated in the first three UN women's conferences, I had already been doing research in Bulgaria for twelve years. This small country in southeastern Europe seemed a good place to start if I wanted to learn something about East European women's activism during the UN Decade. The project required extensive research in the Central State Archives, but I also wanted to interview women who attended the conferences as part of their nation's official delegation. Were they still alive, and if so, how would I find them?

In my quest for names, I had the perfect accomplice in a talented government documents librarian at Bowdoin College, who tracked down the complete list of national delegates to the 1975 congress.[1] I also enjoyed an extended web of Bulgarian friends, colleagues, and two very well-connected octogenarian former in-laws willing to assist me. I mobilized these networks and sought out three women who served as part of the official Bulgarian delegation in Mexico City in 1975: ninety-year-old Krastina Tchomakova, eighty-year-old Elena Lagadinova, and eighty-two-year-old Maria Dinkova. Six months later, I used these initial contacts to arrange interviews with sixteen more Bulgarian women who considered themselves activists in the global women's movement. In all cases, the women delighted in recounting their involvement and seemed surprised that an

American ethnographer cared about their stories. "Does anyone still think about the UN Decade for Women?" they asked me. "It was so long ago. . . . The world has changed so much."

It is said that the past is a foreign country. In Bulgaria, this past of women's organizing took place in another country—a communist country that ceased to exist after 1989. The transition from communism to democracy and free markets produced many victims, and by the time I met them, most of the women I interviewed subsisted on tiny pensions of $200 or $300 a month. If they had saved any money for retirement, they lost everything when the Bulgarian banks collapsed in the mid-1990s. If they had saved money under a mattress, its value evaporated during the chaotic hyperinflation that followed. Although most Bulgarians owned their homes, newly privatized utility monopolies gouged the population for water, electricity, and heat.[2] For a widow living alone, the cost of heating swallowed up the majority of her pension in the winter months. If she tried to turn the heat off to save money, the utility monopoly still charged her for having their pipes run through her flat (lest she benefit from any transient warmth). Public services disappeared; the healthcare system fell apart; and prescription medication prices skyrocketed. Women turned to traditional herbal remedies—valerian for sleep, milk thistle for liver problems, and elderberry syrup to ward off colds—because they could not afford the medicine they needed.

The victors of the Cold War faced no such hardships. The American women who attended the three world conferences were often elite women who enjoyed the privilege of living in a still functioning country. In 2007, Arvonne Fraser called herself and her husband "Golden Oldies"; they were "physically healthy with IRAS [private individual retirement accounts], pensions, Social Security and no pressing obligations."[3] They had the time and resources to write memoirs and produce scholarship on their experiences of the UN Decade. They wrote in English in a society with a vibrant feminist subculture willing to publish women's history. They could afford plane tickets, and their US passports guaranteed visa-free international travel. When they got older, a wide variety of retirement communities, assisted living complexes, and nursing homes preserved their comfort. Heat and medication could be enjoyed simultaneously, and chamomile infusions never replaced blood pressure medication.

For the women I interviewed in Bulgaria, the contrast was striking. Many struggled to pay their bills (let alone buy plane tickets), required

visas to travel to the US, and lived in a society now hostile to feminism and women's issues. Bulgaria lacked infrastructure for pensioners (most elderly people live with grown children), and stories of the pre-1989 world were not to be celebrated. Rather, young people blamed current political and economic difficulties on the state socialist past. Women who did write memoirs self-published them in Bulgarian, and their books were inaccessible to wider scholarly and activist audiences.

An incredible disparity also existed in archival resources. Women from the United States have been conscious creators of their own archives, ensuring that their papers are preserved for posterity. In 2011, for example, a panel was organized at the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians reflecting on the UN Decade for Women. All but two of the speakers were American, and almost all of the Americans had personal archives housed at US universities or historical societies. Eighty boxes of Arvonne Fraser's personal papers have been deposited with the Minnesota Historical Society,[4] including many of her speeches and reports during her time as an official member of the US delegation to Mexico City and Copenhagen. Two separate sets of the personal papers of Charlotte Bunch can be found at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard,[5] and the Mildred Persinger Collection can be accessed through the Wyndham Robertson Library at Hollins University in Virginia.[6] As of 2016, the journalist Peggy Simpson was still working as a freelancer. Although she had not yet created a personal archive, hundreds of her articles are available and fully searchable in online databases. Irene Tinker, a key figure who helped develop the US Women in Development (WID) paradigm, has two personal collections of papers: the Irene Tinker Collection, 1936–2004, at the University of Illinois Archives and the Irene Tinker Papers at American University in Washington, DC.[7] The ninety-three boxes of the Irene Tinker Collection include a wide variety of materials covering the four decades that Tinker worked as an activist and expert on women and international development.[8] Patricia Hutar, the co-head of the US delegation in Mexico City, can be heard reflecting on her long career as a women's activist in an oral history interview saved at the Penn State University Library.[9]

Alternatively, the personal papers of the women's activists of Bulgaria and Zambia are scattered across state archival collections, buried in basements, or irretrievably lost. In Bulgaria, some of the records of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement are contained at the Central State Archive, while others have been deposited in the closets of former

members or were already disposed of. Before 1989, the CBWM had kept its own archives on the top floor of its building on Patriarch Eftimi Boulevard. But in the chaos that followed the sudden collapse of communism and the dissolution of the women's committee, many employees just took whatever papers they wanted before they lost their jobs. Lagadinova kept an entire closet full of folders relating to her work for the CBWM, which she preserved over the years. But another activist I interviewed, Ivanka Meneva, saved her archive for two decades before she finally decided to throw everything away just months before I met her. When the CBWM building was restituted to its prewar owner, what remained of the CBWM archive was moved to the Central State Archives, but it is impossible to know what was lost. I assume similar things happened to the archives of other women's committees in the former Eastern Bloc.

In Zambia, the records of the UNIP Women's League are held in a private party archive controlled by members of UNIP. If you want to study Zambian history, the National Archives of Zambia holds government records only until 1972, when the country became a one-party participatory democracy. After 1972, UNIP was the only political party, and they took all of their records with them when Kenneth Kaunda lost the first multiparty elections in 1991. As a result, access to nineteen years of Zambian history is guarded by the present-day UNIP. Disorganized and stored in a building with no climate control, these documents are fragile, their yellowing pages literally crumbling between my fingers when I examined them in their damp and moldy folders.[10] Moreover, several key boxes were missing. The state of the UNIP archive was so bad that the British Library paid for its partial digitalization through its Endangered Archive Program.[11] But the digital copies could be viewed only on a special computer in the British Library's reading room, with no possibility of making copies or taking photographs, and the collection of scanned documents was both badly organized and incomplete. Even the archives of one of the largest international women's organizations after World War II, the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), are deposited across three continents, with many records still missing and possibly destroyed.

There is an important story to be told about the inequality in historical preservation in the former First, Second, and Third Worlds, but that is the concern of another project. In this book, I did my best with the limited resources that were available to me. I endeavored to be as comprehensive as I could, given the limitations of time and geography, but I am sure

there are archives I missed or interviews I should have done. I know that there is a more robust history to be told, and I sincerely hope this book will inspire future scholars to seek out the sources and people necessary to fill in the many blanks of our current feminist historiography of the UN Decade for Women.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Ana Posadskaya, quoted in Jennifer Suchland, "Is Postsocialism Transnational?" *Signs* 36, no. 4 (2011): 837–62.

2. The press release originally appeared on http://www.ips.org/TV/beijing15/europe-women-the-non-region-at-the-womens-conference. It is no longer available, but a screen shot of it was preserved and is posted at https://scholar.harvard.edu/kristenghodsee/blog/screen-shot-1995-press-release-womens-conference-beijing.

3. Beijing Platform for Action, chap. 2, para. 15, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf.

4. I know this terminology is antiquated and politically incorrect, but these are the terms deployed by the relevant parties at the time. I use these terms throughout my text but do so in full awareness of the recent critiques of the problematic nature of the meta-geographies of the Cold War: see, e.g., Suchland, "Is Postsocialism Transnational?"

5. Defining the words "socialist" and "communist" during the Cold War period is a tricky problem. Although no twentieth-century country ever achieved true communism in the Marxist sense of the term (i.e., the state had withered away), the Western countries always referred to them as communist. To be technically correct, these countries were socialist or state socialist, because they understood that they were still in the socialist stage of their development. But because communism was the ultimate goal, the leading parties were called communist parties, and most activists referred to themselves as communists. Complicating this are the democratic socialist states of Scandinavia and the democratic socialist parties throughout the West that also referred to themselves as socialist. Throughout this book, I employ the terms "socialist," "state socialist," and "communist" to refer to countries with a one-party state striving for a communist future where that state would supposedly wither away. I use the three terms interchangeably, since many of my in-

formants used them this way, and that is how they were used during the historical period with which I am concerned.

6. Peggy Antrobus, *The Global Women's Movement: Origins, Issues and Strategies,* London: Zed, 2004; Devaki Jain, *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

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CHAPTER 1. STATE FEMINISM

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CHAPTER 2. BULGARIA

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APPENDIX

1. My most heartfelt gratitude to Virginia Hopcroft, whose work was so essential to this project.

2. For example, in 2015, one of the electricity distribution monopolies, CEZ from the Czech Republic, lost a class action suit for overcharging its customers. The European Court of Justice also found that the monopoly discriminated against Roma customers in Bulgaria: "European Court of Justice Finds Czech Utility Discriminates against Roma in Bulgaria," July 18, 2015, http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/european-court-of-justice-finds-czech-utility-discriminates-against-roma-in-bulgaria.

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International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations Archives

African Labor History Collection
Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) Collection

National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka

Records of the Ministry of Education
Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Personal Archives

Maria Dinkova, Sofia
Ana Durcheva, Sofia
Chibesa Kankasa, Lusaka
Elena Lagadinova, Sofia
Ivanka Meneva, Sofia
Yordanka Tropolova, Sofia

Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Records of the National Organization for Women (NOW)

Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, Sophia Smith Collection

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